

M4 Junction 17 OBC

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M4 J17 Stakeholder Engagement & Communications Plan (SECP)

25/08/22

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Notice

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

This document provides an outline Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan for the M4 Junction 17 improvement scheme, promoted by Wiltshire Council. The project is being promoted through the Department for Transport's Major Road Network (MRN) fund. In 2019, a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) was submitted to central government (DfT). DfT subsequently provided approval for the project to progress to the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage.

1.2. Purpose

This Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan ('the Plan') is prepared on behalf of Wiltshire Council and outlines the strategy for stakeholder management and communications for the M4 Junction 17 MRN project. A stakeholder can be defined as any individual or group who is, or could become, interested in, involved in, affected by, or influence a project. The Plan describes how the project will ensure that all internal and external stakeholders are informed of relevant project information and that the development of the scheme meets the needs of residents, businesses, workers, and visitors.

This plan provides a framework for communication and engagement activities throughout the project to ensure:

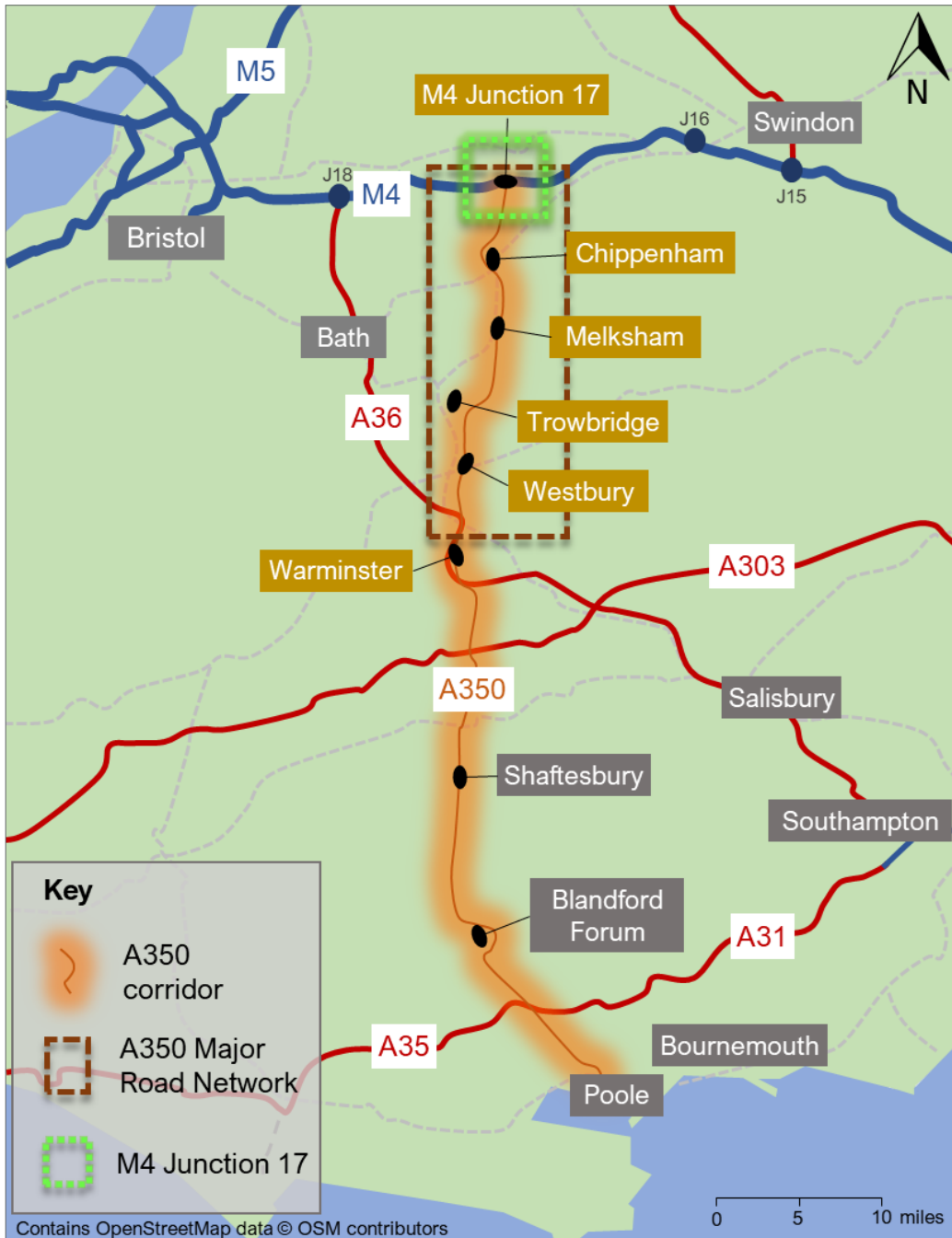
- Accurate and timely communications are provided, including the benefits of the scheme;
- Stakeholders have opportunities to provide input to the scheme's development; and
- Stakeholder expectations can be managed.

Effective communication is key to the success of the project. Therefore, the purpose of the Plan is to ensure that accurate and timely messages regarding the project are given to a range of identified stakeholder groups.

1.3. M4 Junction 17 project context

M4 Junction 17 provides a vital link between the M4 and A350 corridor, which provides access towards the South Coast (Figure 1-1). The A350 connects the towns in west Wiltshire, including Chippenham, Melksham and Trowbridge. M4 Junction 17 also provides a link to Malmesbury and the A429 in the north, and allows for local access via the B4122.

Figure 1-1 – M4 Junction 17 and the A350 corridor



Funding for enhancements at M4 Junction 17 has been sought through Major Road Network (MRN) Funding, and a scheme at this junction was identified as a priority by the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body (STB).

The Western Gateway STB's Regional Evidence Base highlighted the importance of effective north-south connections for the area, but identified this as a particular weakness and constraint to economic growth. The A350 was identified as a priority corridor to facilitate strategic connections to key economic centres and international gateways on the south coast, as well as supporting inter-urban connections between the west Wiltshire towns and the wider area.

Growing congestion and delay at M4 Junction 17 will hinder the economic relationships between the north and south of the area and reduce the attractiveness of Wiltshire for inward investment. The inability of the transport network to accommodate additional demand will also hinder delivery of planned and future housing and employment growth.

The project seeks to build upon the success of the previous improvement works undertaken in 2018, which introduced partial traffic signalisation at the motorway off-slips. The scheme will facilitate further improvements, to allow for envisaged future traffic growth.

2. The M4 Junction 17 improvements project

2.1. Project objectives

The current stated objectives for the M4 Junction 17 scheme are to:

- Reduce delay and improve journey time reliability at M4 Junction 17, supporting journeys on the SRN;
- Enhance the wider package of the MRN/LLM improvements for the A350, which would be most effective when delivered in combination;
- Improve north-south connectivity on the A350 through improvements to M4 Junction 17, the gateway to the A350 from the SRN;
- Ensure that M4 Junction 17 has the capacity to accommodate planned and future growth in the A350 Corridor and in the A350 and Swindon M4 SWLEP Growth Zones, including the Chippenham Urban Expansion and the Wiltshire Local Plan Review; and
- Increase safety levels at M4 Junction 17, taking into account forecast traffic growth.

The benefits of the scheme would be expected to be widespread due to the nature of the A350 route. Benefits would be anticipated for:

- Regular long-distance commuters;
- Local residents in Chippenham, Melksham and surrounds;
- Businesses and hauliers; and
- Visitors, both locally within Wiltshire and those making longer distance journeys (e.g. to the Dorset coast).

Potential direct and indirect adverse impacts of the scheme will be investigated through continued scheme development, with a view to providing suitable mitigation where feasible.

2.2. Project status

A Strategic Outline Business Case for M4 Junction 17 was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2019 which presented the strategic need for the scheme, as well as an initial assessment of the case for investment, including value for money. Following government review and approval at SOBC stage, the project has progressed to the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage.

The focus of the OBC stage is to (re)confirm the strategic need and identify the preferred scheme option. The SOBC stage narrowed options down to a small number of junction improvement options, with increasing scales of intervention:

- Option A – widening the A429 and B4122 approaches to M4 Junction 17 and delivering full signalisation;
- Option B – Widen all approaches to M4 Junction 17 and M4 slip roads, and deliver full signalisation (remains 2 lanes on the gyratory); and
- Option C – Widen overbridges at M4 Junction 17 and deliver an upgrade to 3 lanes on the gyratory. Widen approaches to M4 Junction 17 and deliver full signalisation.

Project development is supported by technical work streams including traffic modelling, engineering design and costing.

The project is being developed in close collaboration with National Highways, which is responsible for the Strategic Road Network (the M4 in this instance).

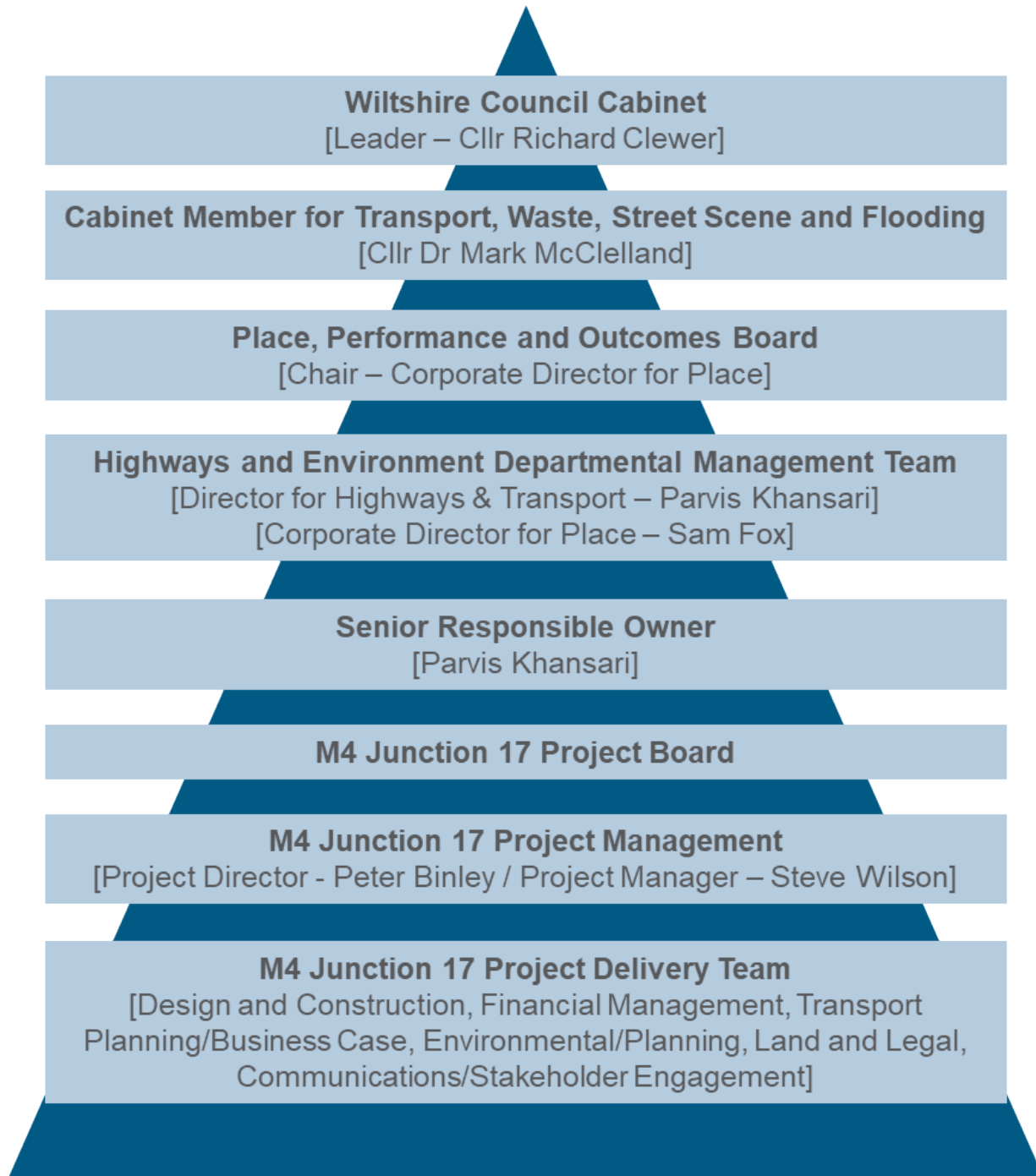
2.3. Project governance

The M4 Junction 17 scheme **will be delivered by Wiltshire Council**. The Council has assembled a **qualified and experienced team** of individuals to steer the project which will continue to evolve as the project progresses. The alliancing contract arrangement between Wiltshire Council and its term consultant Atkins enables Wiltshire Council to augment its own skills and experience in-house with Atkins' vast expertise in delivering schemes of this nature and scale for other major clients across the UK.

The project governance builds upon arrangements successfully used in the delivery of previous major projects. It is designed to encourage **collaborative working** between all parties involved in project delivery, whilst backed by **robust contractual and management arrangements**, with the **full involvement of the Council's Cabinet in carrying out Gateway Reviews** at key stages.

An overview of the scheme governance structure is provided in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1 - Overview of scheme governance



Project governance is provided through a **tiered reporting and management structure** that ultimately reports to Wiltshire Council's **Lead Cabinet Member**. The team will also include the Council's (client side) Project Director and Project Manager.

2.4. Project timeline

The overall key milestones throughout the lifecycle of the project are set out in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 - Project milestone communications timeline

Milestone	Completion date
Strategic Outline Business Case submission	July 2019
Preliminary Environmental Assessment Report	May 2021
Further options assessment	May 2021
Outline Business Case submission (confirmation of preferred option)	August 2022
OBC approval by DfT	October 2022
Preliminary design	November 2023
Detailed design	February 2024
Environmental Assessment Report	February 2024
Draft Full Business Case	May 2024
Tender process complete (identification of preferred contractor)	September 2024
FBC submission	October 2024
FBC approval	December 2024
All approvals / consents in place	January 2025
Award of contract	February 2025
Start construction	April 2025
Finish construction	February 2026
Scheme opening	March 2026

2.5. Other relevant schemes

Improvement works were completed at M4 Junction 17 in May 2018 as part of a Local Growth Fund scheme. This involved partial signalisation of the M4 eastbound and westbound off-slips and the gyratory to reduce instances of queuing on the M4 mainline. The M4 Junction 17 MRN project seeks to provide a more comprehensive and longer-term solution at the junction.

The following additional schemes are currently planned on the A350 corridor:

- **A350 Chippenham Bypass Dualling Phases 4 and 5** – also being promoted by Wiltshire Council through the MRN fund. The Outline Business Case has been approved by DfT and the scheme is progressing to Full Business Case, with construction planned to commence in 2024 (subject to full approval);
- **A350 Melksham Bypass** – being promoted by Wiltshire Council through the DfT Large Local Major Fund. A draft OBC was submitted in 2021 and a final OBC is anticipated by the end of 2022. Subject to business case approval, land acquisition and planning consent, construction is planned to start from 2026; and
- **A350 Yarnbrook and West Ashton Relief Road** – associated with new housing development, timescales are subject to the private developer.

3. Communication objectives and principals

Public and stakeholder engagement is a key method for solving problems and making decisions that directly impact upon those living, working, using services and doing business in the area. Engaging with the stakeholders may include informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering them to understand issues, allowing them to make informed choices.

3.1. Communication objectives

To ensure that concise and informative messages are sent and received it is necessary to follow a set of communication objectives and ensure that key messages are portrayed. The key messages may change over the course of the project as issues arise; however, the immediate messages are given below:

- To inform stakeholders of the scheme progress and to enable feedback on the detailed design;
- To communicate the scheme benefits to all stakeholders at every opportunity;
- To manage stakeholder expectations;
- To address perceptions of the scheme which are inconsistent with the objectives and forecast outcomes;
- To provide consistent and clear information to those affected by the scheme, including the nature of scheme-related impacts and how and when it will affect people; and
- To ensure information is easily accessible for all those who desire it.

3.2. Desired outcomes from communication

Engagement is vital to the success and acceptance of the project. For the scheme to be successful, we must have a clear idea of not only what works from a technical perspective, but also what works for those who are most impacted. Working with stakeholders from the outset will support the design a scheme that works for everyone. Good engagement will:

- Reduce any miscommunications, misunderstanding, and conflict;
- Build on local knowledge that will lead to better decisions and better design;
- Increase mutual trust;
- Enable as many people as possible to have their say and input into decisions, taking people on the journey with us, making communications more transparent; and
- Comply with Wiltshire Council's legal obligations.

3.3. Key communication messages

The key messages for the scheme need to be evident throughout communications, to ensure the communication objective of providing consistent and clear information is met. As the project evolves, the key messages will also change with it.

The current key messages are included here and will be updated at key milestones within the project.

3.3.1. Rationale for the scheme

Traffic problems on the A350 have been of concern for many years. The following key transport problems at the junction have been identified:

- The strategic role of the A350, part of the Major Road Network (MRN), is threatened by increasing congestion, with potential negative connectivity and economic impacts for West Wiltshire.
- Operational and safety performance of the M4, part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), threatened by growth in demand at M4 Junction 17.
- Capacity at M4 Junction 17 will constrain planned and future housing and employment growth in the Chippenham area and the A350 Growth Zone.
- M4 Junction 17 improvements are needed to enhance the wider package of A350 MRN/LLM improvements, which would be most effective when delivered in combination.

3.3.2. Scheme programme and funding

- The scheme will be funded through DfT's Major Road Network Fund. Wiltshire Council (as the promoting authority) will provide a local contribution towards the total scheme cost.
- Wiltshire Council is working closely with National Highways to develop the scheme, due its close relationship to the M4 (part of the Strategic Road Network), which National Highways is responsible for.
- Following the submission of the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the scheme to DfT in 2019, DfT approved the scheme for further development.
- In preparation of the OBC, Wiltshire Council has taken the opportunity to review the strategic context in relation to the scheme and refresh the Options Assessment Report. This will enhance the evidence base and robustness of the OBC through:
 - Incorporating feedback / comments on the SOBC submission (including from DfT);
 - Reviewing the strategic context in relation to the scheme, including reflecting on recent policy developments, local context changes including housing and employment developments, and reviewing the scheme objectives to ensure they remain relevant.
- The OBC is due for submission in August 2022 and will confirm the preferred scheme option at M4 Junction 17. It will set out an assessment of the scheme impacts, across economic, social and environmental criteria. The overall value for money will be assessed, in line with DfT guidance. The OBC provides key information to inform decision making.
- If the Outline Business Case receives approval from central government then the scheme would progress to further design of the preferred option, selection of a preferred contractor (and price) for construction, and submission of a Full Business Case to central government (subject to change this is projected to be Autumn 2024).
- Once the detailed design is completed and the costs and benefits have been confirmed, and the Full Business Case approved by DfT, the scheme construction will start, which is currently planned for Winter 2024 to be completed early 2026.

3.3.3. Design and construction

A full set of key messages for the construction of the scheme will be developed nearer to the construction stage. The current messages are:

- Whilst the scheme is not expected to require acquisition of land, construction of the scheme will require access from neighbouring land. Wiltshire Council will engage with all relevant and affected landowners at an appropriate stage to agree access arrangements.
- During the construction period, there will be some inevitable delays to road users, but this will be minimised as much as possible and affected parties will be informed.
- The environmental impact will be minimised during the scheme design and construction by ensuring that the natural balance of the scheme is understood.

3.3.4. Communication and engagement

- Wiltshire Council is keen to work in partnership with stakeholders (including National Highways) to develop and review options to ensure that we deliver a scheme which works for the local area as well as the wider region.
- There will be opportunities to hear about and share views on the scheme throughout its development and delivery.

4. Stakeholders

The engagement of the public and stakeholders is vital to the success and acceptance of the project. Stakeholders will be identified and involved in the delivery of the project in a number of ways. Ongoing engagement will take place with all key stakeholders, with the public engaged at key points in the process.

4.1. Stakeholder identification and mapping

Stakeholders with similar levels of interest and influence will be grouped together to ensure a consistent level of engagement. Stakeholder groups closer to the project will be kept informed of project developments sooner, and to a greater level of detail than the wider groups.

The key stakeholder groups and their involvement or interest in the M4 Junction 17 scheme are summarised in Table 4-1. Ongoing, Wiltshire Council seeks to manage the different stakeholder needs and expectations in a balanced manner, alongside the need to ensure that the scheme will also continue to meet its primary objectives. As the scheme progresses, continued engagement with these groups will play an important role in mitigating and minimising adverse impacts where practicable.

Table 4-1 - Key stakeholder groups

Stakeholder group	Role / interest / influence	Key group members
Project advice and scrutiny	Stakeholders central to the delivery of the project. Responsible for key decisions and project direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, Wiltshire Council [Cllr Dr Mark McClelland] • Client Project Director / Manager [Peter Binley] • Client Risk Manager • SRO [Parvis Khansari] • Section 151 Officer
Primary stakeholders	Stakeholders that have a significant influence on the project direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Highways • Department for Transport • Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body • Statutory Environmental Bodies [Environment Agency; Natural England; Historic England; English Heritage] • Internal (Wiltshire Council) stakeholders
Actively interested stakeholders	A wider group of stakeholders not directly involved with the project's direction, but influential in specific areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Chippenham • Residents and landowners directly impacted by the scheme • Non-residential stakeholders directly impacted by the scheme • Businesses in Chippenham and the surrounding area • Wiltshire businesses • Wiltshire Chamber of Commerce • Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Transport Infrastructure Sub-Group • Neighbouring local authorities: Swindon Borough Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council • Town and parish councils: Chippenham Town Council, Kington Langley Parish Council, Stanton St. Quintin Parish Council, Sutton Benger Parish Council. • Road Haulage Association • Modal and special interest groups • Equality groups

Stakeholder group	Role / interest / influence	Key group members
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiltshire Police • Fire and Rescue Service • South West Ambulance Service
Advocates and Detractors	Stakeholders not directly involved with the project's direction but with potential to widely lobby or influence views (either in support or against).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign groups • Media • Walking / cycling / horse-riding groups
Wider public	All other stakeholders. Includes the general public and businesses that are not engaged at other levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other local residents • M4 / A350 users (inc. workers / visitors)

4.2. Influence of stakeholders

Stakeholder input is a key part of the scheme development process. Final decision making with regards to the scheme will rest with Wiltshire Council, and other relevant authorities (e.g., DfT in terms of funding). However, the SECP seeks to ensure that all stakeholder views are appropriately considered and are transparent to relevant decision makers.

Wiltshire Council will need to adhere to relevant regulations, such as design and safety standards or environmental regulations, and this means that there may be less scope for stakeholders to influence certain aspects of the scheme.

5. Engagement approach

The way in which each stakeholder group is engaged will vary depending on their needs, level of interest, and level of influence on the project.

There will be frequent meetings of the core project team and working group (project advice and scrutiny). The frequency of meetings will vary between groups and according to the project stage.

It is currently assumed that the M4 Junction 17 scheme does not need to go through the planning process, and that no acquisition of land is required. There are also few properties within close proximity of the junction. The engagement approach will reflect these factors. Currently it is expected that stakeholders will be provided with information updates at key stages of the project, via Wiltshire Council's webpage for M4 Junction 17, and no public event / forum is expected to be held.

Some Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's), and other legal processes may need to be followed, especially in connection with installing traffic signals, any changes to speed limits or other traffic management measures connected to the scheme - in this case these would be subject to a statutory consultation.

Primary stakeholders will receive more regular engagement surrounding the progress of the scheme, in particular National Highways and DfT.

5.1. Engagement methods

Table 5-1 describes different engagement methods which will be used. Engagement will broadly fit into three main purposes / aims:

1. Inform
2. Involve
3. Consult

Table 5-1 - Proposed engagement methods

Method	Description
Letter	Letters will be sent to key stakeholders to establish contact in the first instance, and to provide information about the scheme.
Scheme Webpage / microsite	There will be a specific web page for the scheme on the Wiltshire Council website, which will describe the scheme details, funding, consultation dates and will also provide contact details. This will be the main location for content and information on the scheme.
Media Release	Media releases from the Council will provide stakeholders and the wider public with updates about the scheme at key points.
Social Media	Updates from Wiltshire Council on social media will be used to raise awareness of and to promote the scheme on the Council's Twitter account and Facebook page.
Council news updates (online newsletter)	Updates from Wiltshire Council will be emailed to residents that have signed up to Council news updates.
Meetings – face to face / virtually	Face to face or virtual meetings with key stakeholders allows for detailed design decisions to be made.
Public Event / Forum	Public events, be it physical or virtual will give stakeholders the opportunity to learn more about the scheme and speak to the project team.
Email	Emails will be used to update stakeholders at key points in the programme, such as consultation dates.

5.2. Engagement tracker

A detailed log of engagement activity is held and managed by Wiltshire Council. This document is a live document and is stored and maintained by WC.

Atkins will support WC with this activity and maintain a tracker on the project database.

6. Engagement tasks and activities

Table 6-1 sets out an overarching engagement plan for the project lifecycle. More detailed action plans will be developed for specific activities such as consultations.

Table 6-1 - M4 Junction 17 engagement phases and tasks

Phase	Purpose / Activity	Stakeholder group(s)	Timing	Channel
Startup	Agree Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan and submit proposed Plan to project group	Project Advice & Scrutiny		Meeting
	Complete stakeholder mapping	Project advice and scrutiny		Meeting
	Develop web page	Project advice and scrutiny		Meeting
Scheme Development	Start of scheme development initial engagement - Explain the scheme and determine current stance on the scheme. Options Assessment Report and Strategic Outline Business Case submission	Project advice and scrutiny Primary stakeholders Actively interested stakeholders		Letter, Email, or Meeting
	Produce Options Assessment Report and Strategic Outline Business Case submission	Project advice and scrutiny Primary stakeholders	Spring / summer 2019	Webpage update
	Refresh of Options Assessment Report	Project advice and scrutiny Primary stakeholders	Spring / summer 2021	Webpage update
	Operational assessment (with National Highways)	National Highways	September 2021	Meeting
Outline Business Case submission / approval	OBC submitted to DfT	All	August 2022	Webpage update
	DfT approval of OBC	All	TBC	Webpage update
	Topographical survey / drainage survey / ground investigations / ecology surveys undertaken	Project advice and scrutiny Primary stakeholders Actively interested stakeholders	Autumn / winter 2023	Impacted landowners will be contacted directly via letter or email
	Tender process to identify the preferred contractor for the scheme. The preferred contractor should be identified prior to the submission of the Full Business Case	Project advice and scrutiny Primary stakeholders Actively interested stakeholders	Spring / summer 2024	Webpage update Press release

	Detailed design of the scheme and Environmental Assessment Report published	All	Spring 2024	Webpage update Press release
Full Business Case Submission	Full Business Case submitted to DfT	All	Autumn 2024	Webpage update
	DfT approval of Full Business Case	All	Autumn 2024	Webpage update Press release
Traffic Regulation Orders	In line with TRO regulations, following the approval of the FBC a statutory consultation may be required.	All	Post funding approval and prior to the start of construction	Webpage update Press release Meeting Email Letter
Construction Period	To inform prior to construction start autumn 2024 - Inform all stakeholders of construction timelines, methodology, noise/visual impact during construction and mitigation measures for any environmental impacts	All	Prior to construction commencing – autumn 2024	Webpage update Press release Social media
	Construction updates - Update of construction phase, up to date timeline, impact of any road closures or temporary measures, their location and length of time in operation	Impacted residents Road users Key stakeholders	Throughout construction period	Webpage update Press release Social media
Scheme Opening	Scheme has finished - advertise junction upgrade is fully complete and open for traffic	All	Early 2026	Webpage update Press release Social media

7. Risks

A selection of communications and public acceptability risks are identified in Table 7-1 below, as well as mitigation that can be undertaken.

Table 7-1 - Potential communications risks and mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Objections to some elements of the scheme -e.g. by local residents, landowners, environmental groups or National Highways.	Early engagement with stakeholders and communications to highlight the benefits of the scheme
Impact on existing traffic during construction	Provide advance warning of construction and publicise alternative diversionary routes
Delays to construction due to changes in design at a late stage	Communicate all scheme issues to manage expectations and ensure the process is open, so stakeholders understand how and when they can influence the scheme
Delays causing the scheme to overrun and result in an overspend	Mitigate delays and provide full details of reasons for delays, revised programmes and any revised costs
Lack of enthusiasm for the scheme	Highlight the scheme benefits and ensure accurate evaluation is undertaken
Environmental challenges / pressure as a result of road building contrary to net zero ambitions	Promote the specific and general environmental benefits of the scheme through open and transparent discussions. Early engagement with local interest groups.
Consultation is not wide enough, not recorded properly, or not robust enough	All stakeholders will be assessed and mapped to ensure communications are timely, appropriate and specific. The consultation process will be defined early on and shared with all stakeholders. Communications materials will be replicated across a range of platforms to ensure the process is open and transparent.
Support for the scheme is affected by other schemes close by which could lead to co-ordination problems, schedule clashes, and damage the reputation of these projects	Ensure there is a co-ordinated approach in place with councils, contractors, developers, and National Highways. Agree messaging at a programme level and identify potential points of issue. Ensure communications teams work in parallel and can flag issues to other schemes quickly and easily. Establish regular corridor level communications where issues can be flagged, and action can be agreed.
The public believe that the funding could be better spent on other schemes / maintenance	Ensure that messaging established that the funding is ringfenced and therefore cannot be spent on highway maintenance, etc. Establish a robust Value for Money (VfM) estimate through the development of the Outline Business Case and ensure that this VfM value and the methodology are explained to the public.

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