

**COMPLETION OF THE HEYSHAM TO M6 LINK**  
(Appendices A-D refer)

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In the Local Transport Plan 2001/02 - 2005/06, the County Council set out the principal objectives that the provision of the Heysham to M6 Link should achieve. They were:-

- To improve communications between Morecambe/Heysham and the M6 motorway in order to release land allocated for industrial regeneration and improve access to the Port of Heysham;
- To relieve conditions in the centre of Lancaster in order to permit the continued development of other travel modes, particularly buses and cycles.

In their response to the Local Transport Plan the Government stated that:- "the examination of the Lancaster Local Plan had cast doubt on whether the preferred Green Route was the right option" and wanted to be assured that, if the route were to be included in the Local Plan, that further consultation would be carried out which would provide a comparative technical and environmental assessment of the single carriageway Green (Western) Route and an optimised Orange (Northern) Route. Further design work was undertaken on both routes earlier this year and a public consultation took place between June and September.

In reaching a decision on the proposed route for a highway there are numerous issues that need to be taken into account. These include the public's views on the scheme together with the environmental impacts on both the natural and built environment, the potential benefits to the local economy through reduced delays, inward investment and the ability to promote other associated transport improvements. It will also be important to ensure the proposal complies with the requirements of current planning and environmental legislation and is a scheme that is likely to receive funding from central government.

Both schemes have advantages and disadvantages and public opinion expressed in the MORI survey is split, whilst the consultation response favours the green route. The cost of the two schemes and the numerical cost benefit analyses are similar.

Both proposals address the key strategic aim to improve communications between Morecambe/Heysham and the M6 motorway in order to release land allocated for industrial regeneration and improve access to the Port of Heysham. However only

the western Green Route additionally provides access to the Luneside regeneration site.

The Green Route diverts more traffic from the City Centre which would provide more opportunity to promote sustainable modes. It would open up local movements between Morecambe/Heysham and South Lancaster.

The Green Route is, however, a single carriageway with a limited capacity that may reduce its potential to fully realise the strategic objectives in the long term. The forecast traffic levels at maximum recommended levels could lead to problems in obtaining funding from Government. The Green Route serves only journeys to the south.

There are also serious environmental issues surrounding the Green Route, particularly its proximity to an internationally protected area, that may well prevent the scheme being progressed. Also there are protected species present and significant impacts on the rural landscape.

The northern Orange Route is a shorter dual carriageway proposal with adequate capacity for the future and provides a link for traffic to and from the north, south and east. The scheme also provides a replacement of the substandard M6 Junction 34 and is forecast to give a greater reduction in road casualties.

The Orange Route runs through a built up area at its western end and as a result has more properties between 100m and 300m from the route.

The consultation has led to the consideration of a possible additional crossing of the Lune to access the Luneside West development area in conjunction with the northern route at an additional cost of £5 million to £13 million depending on location and bridge type.

From a detailed analysis of the issues involved and taking account of responses to the consultation it is apparent that both the Green Route and the Orange Route with the additional crossing of the Lune would meet the objectives of the scheme, but with different advantages and disadvantages for each scheme. In view of the concerns expressed by Government Inspectors following the Structure Plan and Local Plan Inquiries, the views of the Government Office for the North West, the potential impacts on the Special Protection Area which may lead to a veto on the western Green Route under the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994 and other environmental concerns, the likelihood of progressing the Western Route would appear limited. Whilst the Orange route will no doubt face some considerable opposition it is unlikely to meet any barriers that cannot be resolved through careful design of measures to mitigate the impacts, though any additional associated bridge crossing would need detailed consideration.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The instructions of the Cabinet are requested.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **Purpose of the Scheme**

In the Local Transport Plan 2001/02 - 2005/06, the County Council set out the principal objectives that the provision of the Heysham to M6 Link should achieve. They were:-

- To improve communications between Morecambe/Heysham and the M6 motorway in order to release land allocated for industrial regeneration and improve access to the Port of Heysham;
- To relieve conditions in the centre of Lancaster in order to permit the continued development of other travel modes, particularly buses and cycles.

In their response to the Local Transport Plan the Government stated that:- "the examination of the Lancaster Local Plan had cast doubt on whether the preferred Green Route was the right option" and wanted to be assured that, if the route were to be included in the Local Plan, further consultation would be carried out which would provide a comparative technical and environmental assessment of the single carriageway Green (Western) Route and an optimised Orange (Northern) Route.

Further design work was undertaken on both routes earlier this year and a public consultation took place between June and September. Problems were experienced with the initial distribution by a private company specialising in such work and the consultation was extended and leaflets redistributed door to door throughout the district. 13 public exhibitions were held. In order to quantify the views of the people of Lancaster District MORI were commissioned to carry out a survey of a representative sample of 1,000 people in the district.

### **Scheme History**

A connection between Morecambe Road and a North-South Bypass of Lancaster (future M6) was proposed as far back of 1949 and a route north of Lancaster between the M6 Motorway and the Morecambe and Heysham area was a concept in the development of the Lancaster Bypass. The proposed route was along a route similar to the current Orange Route proposal from Torrisholme to connect with the M6 near Halton. In previous Lancaster Local Plans land alongside the Lancaster and Morecambe College has been protected for highway purposes. In 1985 a scheme identification study examined the possibility of a Western Bypass and this was subsequently selected as the basis for the route to be taken forward.

Two similar western routes for the completion of the Heysham to M6 Link, both following alignments close to the currently proposed Green Route, have undergone planning inquiries. Following the Structure Plan Examination in Public in 1995 the Panel recommended that the Lancaster Western Bypass be deleted from the plan and the possibility of a Northern Bypass be investigated.

The panel considered that the benefits of the Western Bypass would be unlikely to outweigh the combined effects of the visual impact on the landscape and the potential harm to nature conservation interests. They noted that the road would sever the SSSI from its hinterland, which is an important area for birds at high tide and maintaining the stability of the wetland cannot be assured.

The panel also considered that any benefits to students commuting between Morecambe and the University would encourage a land use pattern which would be contrary to the aim of Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG13)

In 1997/98 the County Council held a public consultation into three proposed routes, two to the West of Lancaster and one to the North. The consultation and an associated survey indicated widespread support for a road link but views were divided on the route. Following this consultation the County Council selected the Green Route, a Western Bypass of the City.

A Western Bypass was considered at the Lancaster Local Plan Inquiry held during 1998 and 1999. The Inspector concluded that the benefits of the Green Route were not clear cut but as this route would cause significant damage to the environment, he recommended that the Western Bypass should be deleted from the Local Plan. However, Lancaster City Council resolved not to accept the Inspector's recommendations because:-

1. The changes now proposed by Lancashire County Council to the route and specification alters the balance of costs and benefits in favour of the road.
2. Changes in circumstances since the Inquiry now mean that there is a reasonable degree of certainty of proceeding with the Heysham/M6 Link on a western alignment within the plan period.
3. There is a need for consistency between the Local Plan and Structure Plan, Regional Planning Guidance and the Regional Strategy.

The changes proposed by the County Council, were developed for the Lancashire Local Transport Plan submission. These proposals reduced the western route from dual carriageway to wide single carriageway standard and limited the lighting of the route to the junctions and their approach roads rather than over the full length of the route as previously envisaged. In addition the route was amended at the southern end where it would cross the ethylene pipeline.

A western route, incorporating the changes outlined above, was included in the Lancashire Local Transport Plan 2001/2-2005/6 as the major scheme bid. The Government response whilst accepting that completing the Heysham to M6 Link could be a way forward in tackling Lancaster's various traffic problems, questioned the suitability of the route, restating the doubts raised through the public inquiry processes, viz. "The examination of the Lancaster Local Plan has cast doubt on whether the preferred "Green Route" on which your submission was based is the right option". In particular, the response questioned whether the Green Route would rightly fit with wider local and regional planning objectives, viz. "But it is important that the right option should be adopted which fits with wider local and regional planning objectives. That means that it should be compatible with the Lancaster Local Plan." Furthermore the response highlighted the potential difficulties of proceeding with only this route, viz. "You will appreciate that the Secretary of State cannot pre-empt the outcome of the consultation or pre-judge whether he would wish to use his powers to object to the Council's proposed changes to the Plan."

The currently proposed Green Route incorporates a further change in the alignment of the wide single carriageway scheme at its southern end where it would cross the ethylene pipeline. Following discussions with the Health and Safety Executive and Shell Chemicals (owners of the pipeline) the route was again realigned to cross the ethylene pipeline where it is already suitably protected under the existing A6. This

realignment brings the route closer to Galgate with a long elevated crossing of the valley of the River Conder and includes the dualling of a short section of the A6 south of Galgate.

### **Draft Regional Planning Guidance**

The Port of Heysham has been identified as a regional gateway in Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the North West. Policies in the Draft support investment in transport infrastructure which focuses on such gateways, and the Heysham to M6 Link Road has been included as a regionally significant transport proposal that should be delivered by 2007 as a matter of priority. The Report of the Panel at the Public Examination of the Draft Regional Planning Guidance concluded that the Heysham to M6 Link Road should remain a priority. The North West Development Agency supports the provision of improved access between the Port and the M6 in its strategy for the Region (England's North West - A Strategy Towards 2020), which will also help to support the delivery of an integrated regeneration package for the resort of Morecambe, a traditional coastal town with severe problems of economic decline and social exclusion.

### **GONW Response to Lancaster District Local Plan Modifications**

Lancaster City Council has resolved to include the Green Route within the Local Plan and has advertised this modification. In response to this the letter of 1st August 2001 from GONW Senior Planning Officer, objecting to the inclusion of the Green Route in the Local Plan, clearly states their position of still needing to be convinced that the western Green Route is the right option for the completion of the Heysham to M6 Link. (Appendix A) In addition to a number of procedural issues, the letter detailed a range of objections, the grounds for these were:-

- a) The environmental impact of the route, especially in respect of a "European Site" (Lune Estuary), and the route's questionable ability to meet the terms of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 compared to the northern Orange Route.
- b) The adequacy of the lower standard Green Route to meet its strategic objective of improving access to the Port of Heysham so as to facilitate growth of the port. It is considered likely that this strategic objective would be compromised because traffic on the route is forecast to be close to capacity at opening.
- c) The preference for a western route is seriously questionable, viz. " Given that the balance of advantage appears to lie with the northern route on most counts, the preference for the western route appears perverse."

### **Trans-European Network**

Whilst the M6 forms part of the Trans-European Road Network, the existing A683 route linking the Port of Heysham to the M6 does not. Nevertheless, the Port has been included in proposals for the establishment of a list of ports forming part of the Trans-European Network

## Scheme Costs

The scheme estimates are:-

Green Route £59.4 million  
Orange Route £62.1 million.

Whilst the costs have been estimated as accurately as possible, at this stage of the design process the level of accuracy achievable means that the costs of the two proposals are broadly similar. The benefit to cost analysis for the schemes using the Governments COBA programme also indicates a similar high benefit to cost ratio for each scheme;

Green Route 3.7  
Orange Route 3.4

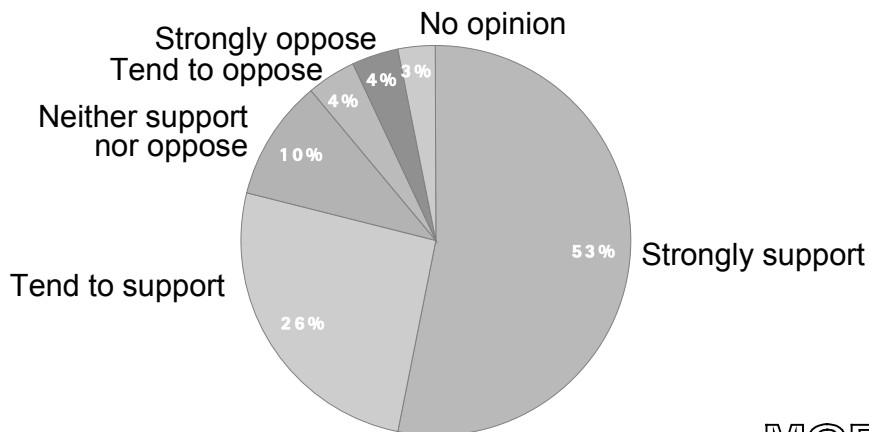
A benefit to cost ratio higher than 2 is generally considered to be a scheme that would have a good chance of obtaining funding.

## Survey Results.

In August and September 2001 MORI undertook a structured survey of 1000 residents at randomly selected points within Lancaster District. The survey was conducted among a representative cross-section of residents. Responses are statistically significant to +/- 3% with a 95% confidence. The MORI summary report is appendix 'B' to this report.

## In Principle Support

**Q** *In principle, how strongly do you support or oppose the building of a road link between Heysham and the M6?*



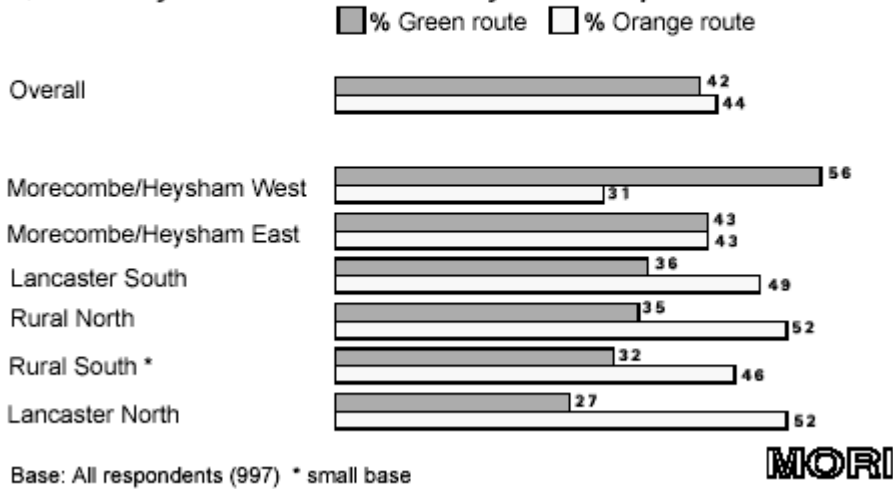
Base: All respondents (997)

MORI

The survey demonstrated strong support for the principle of building a road link.

## Overall Preference

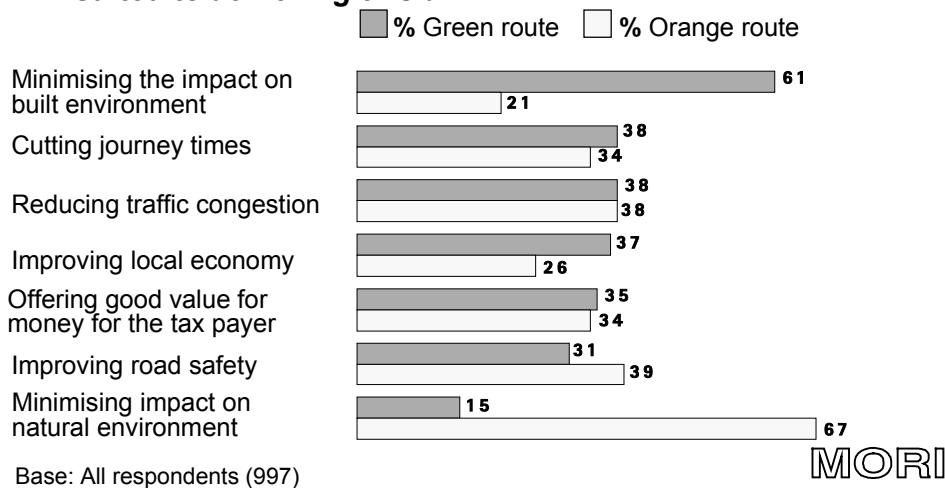
Q *Could you tell me which route you would prefer overall?*



In total the survey indicates similar levels of support for each route. The district was divided into six areas, based on postcodes, for analysis and this indicates local differences in support for the routes.

## Comparison of Routes

Q *Could you please tell me which route you think is best suited to achieving this aim?*



The comparison of routes demonstrates the split on issues between the routes.

## Consultation Response

A total of 15,685 responses were received. As the responses are self selecting and therefore may not be a representative sample of the population it is not possible to give an indication of how statistically reliable these results are.

### Support

Support Both Orange and Green Routes.	15.7%
Support Green Route only	44.7%
Support Orange Route only	32.2%
Support neither	7.4%
Total percentage indicating support for the Green Route is	60.4%
Total percentage indicating support for the Orange Route is	47.9%

### Opposition

Oppose both Green and Orange Routes	5.5%
Oppose Green Route only	28.0%
Oppose Orange Route only	31.3%
Oppose neither route	35.2%
Total percentage indicating opposition to the Green Route is	33.5%
Total percentage indicating opposition to the Orange Route is	36.8%

## Main issues raised by the Heysham-M6 consultation

However, as well as completing the questionnaire, respondents to the consultation had the opportunity to make further comments. Just under 4,000 people, roughly a quarter of the total who responded, chose to make additional comments. Of these, 32% support only the Orange Route, 29% only the Green Route, 20% either route and 13% neither route.

The issues considered in this report are based on those most frequently raised in the consultation. The concerns raised by more than 3% of those who commented, in order of overall response magnitude, were:-

### Environmental Concerns

28% of respondents were worried about the impact of a new road on the built and natural environments. Almost 50% of those who made this comment support the Orange Route because they consider the Green Route to be too destructive of the natural environment, whilst a further 20% do not support the building of any road at all. 27% thought that improvements to the built environment outweighed damage to the natural environment.

### Scheme Cost

20% of the respondents commented on the relative costs of the two schemes. 50% of these believe the Orange Route to be better value for money, generally because the route is dual carriageway and is seen to be a better long-term option. A further 21% do not believe that any road is good value and that the money would be invested in Public Transport, whilst 14% think that the Green Route represents a worthwhile cost.

### M6 Junction 34

20% of all those who commented cited the safety and efficiency of Junction 34 as a major concern, saying that improvements at this junction are vital. For over 50% of these respondents, this is a significant reason for supporting the Orange Route.

### Regeneration

20% of respondents commented on the need to regenerate the area. However, there is a very broad spread of opinion as to the best way of ensuring regeneration, with 20% of these respondents favouring both routes, 20% against both routes and the remainder split equally between favouring either Green or Orange Routes.

### Accessibility

Linked to the need for general regeneration are specific concerns about accessibility, particularly to the industrial estates and to the Port of Heysham.

20% of those who made a comment were concerned about general accessibility, almost all wanting to see one or other route built. Of these 40% supported only the Green Route, 35% only the Orange Route and 13% supporting either route. Support for the Green Route is generally because it provides another bridge over the Lune and gives a direct access to South Lancaster.

The same split is also reflected in the comments made by the 13% of respondents worried about access to industrial estates. However, half of these respondents are specifically concerned about access to Luneside West and favour the Green Route because it provides better access to this estate.

9% of respondents were concerned about the future viability of the Port of Heysham if access was not improved and half of these were in favour of the Green Route.

### Congestion

18% of those who responded were concerned about congestion in Lancaster, with 33% of this group believing the Green Route to be the only solution and 25% thinking similarly of the Orange Route. The main reasons for supporting the Green Route were the belief that it would provide better access to South Lancaster, that the Orange Route will increase congestion in the Torrisholme area and that the Orange Route has too many light-controlled junctions. 20% believe that either road would be an improvement, whilst 15% think that the required relief should be produced by alternative means.

### Public Transport

16% of respondents believed that alternatives to the car should be promoted. Of these 40% of these did not want to see either road built, 30% supported the Orange Route and 20% supported the Green Route.

### Road Standard

15% of those who commented are unhappy at the single-carriageway standard of the Green Route. 60% of these respondents support only the Orange Route because it is dual carriageway and a further 10% are unhappy with the standard but would still support the Green Route. The 15% who support the Green Route and not the Orange Route mainly do so on the incorrect premise that the Green Route would be a dual carriageway.

### Southerly Direction of Green Route

15% of respondents believe that much of the traffic that would use the new road would go south, with 50% of them supporting the Green Route for that reason. The other respondents in this group consider that the Orange Route is preferable if movements to the north are also considered.

### Safety

14% of comments cite safety as a reason behind route choice, with 45% of these choosing the Orange Route both because of improvements to Junction 34 and because of the higher road standard. Of the remainder, 25% believe that the Green Route will improve safety in the urban area whilst the remainder are split equally between those who believe that no road should be built and those who feel that there is no overall difference between the routes.

### Access to the Port of Heysham

Better access to the Port of Heysham is required by 8.7% of respondents, the majority of whom favour the Green Route. This is in part linked to the larger proportion of port traffic that is to and from the south.

### Traffic impact on the Torrisholme and Skerton areas

7% of respondents were specifically concerned with the traffic impact of the Orange Route where it runs through a built up area in the Torrisholme area. The majority of these respondents favoured the Green Route because it does not directly affect Torrisholme.

### Pollution

Pollution is of concern to 7% of those who made comments, the majority favouring the Green Route as being the best option for alleviating urban pollution.

### Lorries

For 6.5% of those who commented, a reduction in the number of heavy lorries in the urban area is an important benefit of the Heysham-M6 link, with half believing that the Green Route is the most likely to produce a reduction.

### The Galgate/University/S. Lancaster Corridor

6.0% of those who made a further comment are concerned about the impact of the Green Route on this corridor. Whilst most are concerned that the Green Route will

be detrimental to the area, roughly one third believe that the Green Route will bring traffic reduction benefits.

### New Junctions

The new junctions on the Orange Route, particularly the new traffic-signal controlled junction with the A683, are thought, by 5% of those who commented, to be a cause of further traffic congestion. This group tends to support the Green Route.

### Hospital access

Some 3% of those who made further comments were concerned about the ability of the emergency services to move at speed around the Lancaster/Morecambe area. In particular, concerns were voiced about access to Lancaster Royal Infirmary and about evacuation of the peninsula in the event of problems at Heysham power station. The Green Route is seen as providing another access for the hospital and the most appropriate escape route.

### **Other Representations**

Also 1,575 letters of support for a Heysham to M6 link were sent to Geraldine Smith MP between March and May this year. Of these 47% were clearly in favour of the western Green Route 1% clearly supporting a northern route and 52% supporting a road link but without specifying a route. Only 6 of these letters did not support a road building solution. It is likely that the people who wrote these letters have also contributed to the County Council's consultation.

In addition, as part of the public consultation exercise, a range of official consultees, including government departments and agencies, local councils, public bodies, societies and services, were contacted.

Support for the Green Route was expressed by:

MOD Defence Estates,  
The North West Regional Development Agency,  
Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service,  
Tatham Parish Council (preference for a dual carriageway route)  
Stagecoach North West,  
Yealand Redmayne Parish Council  
Slyne-with-Hest Parish Council  
Heaton-with-Oxcliffe Parish Council

Opposing the green route were:

Government Office for the North West (in response to the Local Plan modifications)  
British Waterways  
Lancaster Civic Society  
National Farmers Union  
Arkholme Parish Council  
Ellel Parish Council  
Silverdale Parish Council  
Over Kellet Parish Council  
Roeburndale Parish Council

Support for the Orange Route was expressed by:

English Nature  
South Lakeland District Council  
Carnforth Town Council  
Cockerham Parish Council  
Lancashire Constabulary  
Lancaster Civic Society  
Ellel Parish council  
Silverdale Parish Council Arkholme Parish Council  
Yealand Redmayne Parish Council  
Over Kellet Parish Council  
Roeburndale Parish Council

Opposing the Orange Route were:

Slyne-with-Hest Parish Council

Other consultees who responded, including the Environment Agency, the Countryside Agency, Farming & Rural Conservation Agency and Wyre Borough Council did not express a preference or support for either scheme.

The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, Trade and Industry has indicated strong support for both routes. The Heysham to M6 Link committee, set up to support completion of a link road has expressed its preference for the Green Route.

Both MPs for the District have issued statements on the proposed routes. Meetings have also been held with both MPs and they have been invited to provide an updated statement for the Cabinet meeting. The updated statement from Geraldine Smith MP in support of the Green Route is at Appendix 'D'.

A meeting has been arranged with the Cabinet of Lancaster City Council to obtain their views and a verbal report on the outcome of this meeting will be given to Cabinet.

### **Industrial Development and the Local Economy**

The Port of Heysham facilities and services are provided to freight and ferry operators, principally to Ireland and the Isle of Man. Most of the freight handled is made up of trade with Northern Ireland. Around a third of all sailings between Northern Ireland and Great Britain are via Heysham. Traffic through the Port has continued to grow at an average of over 6% per annum between 1994 and 1998. A direct connection to the national strategic road network is essential if this trade with Ireland, and to Europe as part of the Trans-European Network, is to continue to grow.

Improved access and reduction in traffic levels are essential to Morecambe and Lancaster, for the regeneration and development of tourism and cultural activities. Both routes provide improved access to areas in need of regeneration and areas identified for development.

The western Green Route will provide access to the key Luneside area south of the river and provide better links to the University and Bailrigg Business Park area. The northern Orange Route will better serve the Lancaster Business Park at Cottam's Farm, by virtue of the improved link with Morecambe and Heysham to the improved Junction 34. Both routes will provide improved access to the other principal development sites in the area.

A new link road has the potential to improve access to existing industrial sites and to proposed new areas of employment land to meet current and future relocation, expansion, and inward investment needs.

Either alignment of the Heysham to M6 Link will assist access to:--

- |                                     |                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| · Mellishaw Lane                    | 30 ha greenfield site.   |
| · Lancaster West Industrial Estate  | 21.5 ha brownfield site. |
| · Heysham Industrial Estate         | 27 ha brownfield site.   |
| · Port of Heysham Industrial Estate | 43.5 ha brownfield site. |

The western alignment will serve:-

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| · Luneside West          | 31 ha brownfield site. |
| · Bailrigg Business Park | 11 ha greenfield site. |

The northern alignment will assist access to:-

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| · Lancaster Business Park | 10.5 ha greenfield site. |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

The development of adequate employment land is essential to the economy of Lancaster and the surrounding sub-region. The North West Development Agency has expressed strong support for the construction of the Heysham to M6 Link. The North West Development Agency prefers the western alignment, principally due to the improved access it would afford to Luneside West. A letter from the North West Development Agency is Appendix C to this report.

### **Luneside Industrial Area**

Luneside West is currently an under used, semi-derelict area characterised by poor quality, low intensity, industrial uses. As the centre of Lancaster's former linoleum industry, it contains areas of contamination. Access to the site is also constrained, vehicles must first negotiate the City's congested one-way system before passing through residential areas, or using the historic St. George's Quay. Neither route is suitable for heavy goods vehicles.

The North West Development Agency (NWD A) is currently working towards the redevelopment of the Luneside East site and is looking to invest in the remediation of Luneside West over the next five years. The cost of removing contaminated material and remediation of the site is likely to require investment from the NWD A and other sources of between £10 million and £15 million. Without improved access the use of this site would give rise to severe traffic problems that may limit the extent of regeneration possible.

Only the Green Route would provide an alternative access to the industrial site. The current northern Orange Route would not provide a new access to the Luneside Industrial Area which would adversely affect its regeneration potential. However, an alternative access across the River Lune to the industrial site, which could be implemented in conjunction with an Orange Route, has been suggested through the consultation and has been investigated. Four alternative crossing locations have been identified which are:-

- a) Oxcliffe Crossing - a single carriageway road-bridge over River Lune at western end of Salt Ayre Landfill Site close to the currently proposed Green Route Lune Viaduct. This access would connect the existing roundabout on

Ovangle Road near the Mellishaw Gypsy Caravan Park, via a widened, realigned Lancaster Road on the north side of the river, into the former Lancaster Corporation Isolation Hospital Site/Lancaster Marsh area to the north of Freeman's Wood on the south side of the Lune. The preliminary estimated cost is £13m including replacement facility at Glasson Dock for loss of New Quay. A bridge at this point would have similar environmental issues to the proposed Green Route bridge.

- b) New Quay Crossing - a single carriageway road-bridge over River Lune near the eastern end of Salt Ayre Landfill Site in the New Quay area. This access would connect Salt Ayre Lane via a new roundabout, a partly realigned Doris Henderson Way and a new road across Salt Ayre Sports Centre all-weather pitch on the north side of the river, to New Quay Road on the south side of the Lune in the vicinity of New Quay and Lune Mills. The preliminary estimated cost is £9m including replacement facilities for Salt Ayre Sports Centre and extending New Quay.
- c) Lune Mills Crossing - a single carriageway road bridge over River Lune towards the eastern end of Salt Ayre Sports Centre sports fields in the Lune Mills (Forbo) area. This crossing would connect Morecambe Road at its existing junction with Scale Hall Lane from a new cross-roads junction on the north side of the Lune to the line of the former Lancaster-Glasson railway line in the vicinity of Lune Mills on the south side of the river. The preliminary estimated cost is £5 million to £8 million depending on the type of bridge. This includes for alterations to facilities at Salt Ayre Sports Centres.
- d) Ford Quay Crossing - a single carriageway road-bridge over River Lune approximately midway between Carlisle Bridge (WCML) and the eastern end of Salt Ayre Sports Centre sports ground, in the Ford Quay area. This crossing would connect Morecambe Road from a new "T" junction on the north side of the river, via Ford Quay and the Luneside East Redevelopment Site, to a new junction with St Georges Quay/New Quay Road near Lancaster Cricket Club on the south side of the Lune. The preliminary estimated cost is £5 million to £8 million depending on the type of bridge.

It is envisaged that any of these proposed new crossings would provide the necessary access to the regeneration areas on Luneside in order to facilitate their full development potential. The new crossing would not form a new vehicular access in to the City, although there could be scope for a new bus-only link into the city via the railway station and pedestrian and cycle access.

Based on Industrial use the forecast effect of a new bridge is to lessen the traffic reduction on Morecambe Road of between 22% and 33% by approximately 4%. It will, however, increase the relief on the City Centre Gyrotory System by around 5%.

With an Orange Route and a new bridge crossing to Luneside the forecast number of HGVs on Morecambe Rd would be reduced from approximately 1800 per day without the scheme to around 1450 per day.

Description	No Scheme	Orange	Changes due to re-routing of Luneside element			
			Ford Quay	Lune Mills	New Quay	Oxcliffe
<b>Morecambe Rd</b>						
At Carlisle Bridge	38,900	27,700	27,690	27,690	27,690	27,690
Ford Quay to Scale Hall	38,900	27,700	29,210	27,690	27,690	27,690
Scale Hall Lane to Ovangle Rd	35,100	23,400	24,910	24,910	23,390	23,390
Ovangle Rd to A683 White Lund	36,700	28,700	30,210	30,210	30,210	28,300
<b>Town Centre</b>						
A6 Dalton Square	27,500	24,200	22,790	22,790	22,790	22,790
A6 Cable Street	30,200	25,800	24,390	24,390	24,390	24,390
<b>Orange Route</b>						
A683 to Torrisholme Road		29,300	30,810	30,810	30,810	30,810

If an access to Luneside is to be included as part of an Orange Route there will be a need for further investigation and local consultation to determine the best option. This could take place in parallel with the necessary appraisal so as not to delay the scheme.

### **The Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994**

In recent years the importance of the Environment has grown and the legislation protecting areas of importance has been strengthened. The high importance of environmental issues with the Government has been demonstrated through the recent rejection of the Hastings Bypass which had an impact on areas with similar protection to those on the Lune Estuary. In this case there was no alternative highway proposal.

The European Union Habitats Directive (EC Directive 92/43/EEC) was transposed into UK law through these Regulations. A European Site such as the Lune Estuary SSSI, which as an integral part of the Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area (SPA) for the conservation of wild birds, is protected under Regulations 48 and 49. The same Morecambe Bay area, including the Lune Estuary SSSI, is also a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) for the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, which again has the same protection under the Regulations.

Under this legislation, where a development is considered to have a significant impact on a European site and following assessment it is judged to affect the integrity of the site, the planning authority cannot approve the development where there is an alternative. In the case of the Green Route there is an alternative Orange Route that would have no impact on the European Site (SPA, cSAC).

Government Office for the North West has indicated that they would consider the Green Route to have a significant impact on the protected area. English Nature has raised a specific concern relating to the proposed bridge and may have other issues following consideration of a full environmental assessment. Construction of a Green Route would be challenged and may be prevented under this legislation.

English Nature has specifically identified the piers of the proposed bridge crossing of the River Lune for the Green Route as likely to have a significant effect on the Lune Estuary SSSI and therefore the Morecambe Bay European Site. To determine the nature of these impacts a study of the river would be required. An alternative type of bridge with fewer piers may mitigate the problems, however this would lead to substantially increased costs, for example to reduce from the proposed 9 piers within

the river to a bridge with only 4 piers within the river would increase the scheme cost by £16 million. Such a change would also require an increase in the height of the bridge and adjacent embankments thereby increasing the visual intrusion of the bridge.

Resolution of this issue alone would not necessarily guarantee a clear way forward as other issues may well be identified in the detailed environmental assessment that will be required to accompany a planning application. The effects that would be considered on the protected area would also include assessment of impact on adjoining areas used by species for which the site is designated. For example the impact of the route on areas used by birds from the protected area, for roosting or feeding at high tide, would be considered relevant.

The M.E.P. for the area has been consulted, to establish if there is any precedent of application of the E.U. Habitats Directive which may provide a useful comparison, but at the time of writing the report, no schemes with an equivalent position have been identified.

If the Orange Route is selected and the option of a bridge to access Luneside West is included, it may be necessary to include a river study as part of the environmental appraisal. However, the further upstream a bridge is located, the narrower is the Lune and therefore less piers would be required and greater is the distance from the Special Protection Area, thereby reducing markedly any likely impact.

### **Nature Conservation**

European protected species, which, in the Lancaster area are most likely to be great crested newts and bats, are protected under The Conservation (Natural Habitats & C/Regulations 1994), Regulation 39, and Regulation 44, which details the terms for the granting of a license for the relocation of a species, again stipulates the requirement that there is "no satisfactory alternative" (Regulation 44(3)(a)) as one of the tests to be applied before the protection under the act can be derogated. In view of the greater conservation interest and numbers of protected species in the area traversed by the Green Route it could be more difficult to justify the route's promotion under these regulations.

The western Green Route would sever a group of four ponds currently designated as a County Biological Heritage Site (Sellerley/Berry's Farm Ponds BHS), in which great crested newts (European protected species) have been recorded. There is no record of any of the few remaining ponds north of Lancaster, in the vicinity of the Orange Route, containing great crested newts. Bats have been recorded across the areas west and north of Lancaster although it is anticipated that neither route would affect bat roosts.

The rural area west and south of Lancaster, through which the Green Route would pass, contains a greater range of species than the rural area north of the city.

In the area west and south of Lancaster the following species have been recorded:-

- a) Over 120 different birds of which around 60 are conservationally important or notable species, including 18 protected species.
- b) Six species of bat.
- c) Badgers have territories across the area.
- d) Amphibians (frogs, toads and newts, including great crested newts).
- e) Hares are often seen.

- f) An otter has been seen.
- g) Mostly good to high quality species-diverse hedgerows containing diverse native tree and shrub species, often with hedge bank and/or ditch variety of hedge bottom flora.
- h) Numerous woods of various sizes including a number of ancient woodlands.
- i) Variety of vegetation including salt-tolerant plants and grasses of the estuary, fresh-water and wetland species of the canal, rivers, streams and ponds, and grasses and crops of the farmland.

In the area north of Lancaster, through which the Orange Route would pass, the following species have been recorded:-

- a) Around 80 to 85 different birds, of which around 40 are conservationally important or notable species, including 3 protected species.
- b) Five species of bat.
- c) Amphibians (common frog recorded in one pond in area around route).
- d) Hares rarely seen.
- e) Mostly good to low quality hedgerows of restrictive species diversity and generally without a bank or ditch.
- f) Few small woods and small ancient woodland sites. Limited variety of vegetation including fresh-water and wetland species of the canal, river and streams and farmland grasses and crops.

#### County Biological Heritage Sites

The Green Route would affect the following 7 Biological Heritage Sites:-

- a) Oxcliffe Marsh BHS - degraded marsh area crossed by route on embankment
- b) River Lune BHS - river crossed by route on a viaduct (piers in river)
- c) Freeman's Wood BHS - western end of wood crossed by route requiring felling of some trees
- d) Crane Wood BHS - northeast corner of ancient woodland crossed by route in cutting requiring felling of some trees
- e) Sellerley/Berry's Farm Ponds BHS - group of great crested newt ponds severed by route
- f) Scale House Farm Pond BHS - pond removed by route in cutting
- g) Lancaster Canal BHS - canal crossed by route on a viaduct and again by the route's Link to Scotforth Road on a bridge

The Orange Route would affect the following 2 Biological Heritage Sites:-

- a) Lancaster Canal BHS - canal crossed by route on a bridge
- b) River Lune BHS - river crossed by route on a viaduct

#### **Impact on the Built Environment**

The provision of the Orange Route would require the acquisition and demolition of 3 properties, which are associated with the remodelling of M6 Junction 34. The Green Route would not directly require the demolition of any properties.

The number of properties within 100 metres is similar for both routes with 30 close to the Green Route and 28 close to the Orange Route. Between 100 and 300 metres there are more properties for the Orange Route with 590 properties compared to 306 for the Green Route. The Orange Route also runs alongside the Lancaster/Morecambe College.

On the Green Route there are a further potential 500 new properties between 100m and 300m from the link between the Green Route and the A6 through the proposed Whinney Carr housing development.

Householders whose properties were reduced in value due to the direct impacts of the provision of the new highway would be eligible for compensation for that loss. A noise assessment has been carried out across the network which indicates that for both routes the number of properties that would benefit from reduced traffic noise is much higher than the number who would experience an increase.

The provision of the Green Route would result in 2512 properties suffering a significant increase in noise levels, but 11518 properties would benefit from a significant reduction in noise.

The provision of the Orange Route would result in 1983 properties suffering a significant increase in noise levels, but 12822 properties would benefit from a significant reduction in noise.

An assessment of pollution from the proposed highway indicates that there are no points where the roadside level would exceed national standards.

### **Suitability of a Wide Single Carriageway Layout for Green Route**

Government Guidance on the provision of new rural road links is set out in TA 46/97. This Advice Note indicates flow ranges for which carriageway standards are most likely to be economically and operationally acceptable in normal circumstances for any given traffic flow. Should forecast traffic flows on the Link be in excess of the suggested flow range, it may be more difficult to obtain funding for the scheme.

The proposal for the western Green Route detailed in the Lancaster District Local Plan was for an illuminated dual carriageway. In June 2000 as part of the preparation of the Local Transport Plan the standard was reduced to a wide single carriageway with lighting restricted to the junctions and their approach roads in order to reduce costs. The forecast traffic on the busiest link of the Green Route is at the maximum opening year value shown for a wide single carriageway in TA 46/97. The capacity of the road would be adequate on opening but some congestion would be expected to occur within a period of around 15 years after opening. This will mean that the scheme's ability to meet the objectives of optimising regeneration, supporting economic growth, increasing tourism etc may be diminished in the longer term.

The standard of the road proposed for the Green Route is an important issue identified from the Public Consultation questionnaires. Around 15% of the approximately 4,000 comments submitted raised the issue of the road standard and its adequacy. In addition, at the Public Consultation Exhibitions, concern was expressed by many regarding the reduction in standard of the Green Route from the original, dual carriageway road to what was considered to be an inadequate wide single carriageway layout.

The Orange Route is proposed as a dual carriageway as its forecast flows along the whole of the route, at opening year, are well above the maximum recommended flow for a wide single carriageway at opening year

## **Costs of a Dual Carriageway Green Route**

The estimated cost (January 2001 prices) of the wide single carriageway Green Route is £59.4m. The cost of providing a dual carriageway along the same Green Route alignment is estimated at £80.4m, an increase of £21m. The cost of dualling the proposed wide single carriageway Green Route at some future time is estimated, at January 2001 prices, to be an additional £27m. The prospects for gaining funding for subsequent dualling, at such a cost, may be limited and may have implications for M6 Junction 33 to cope with such levels of traffic.

## **M6 Junction 34**

If a western route were built then there would remain the need for the Highways Agency to improve the substandard Junction 34. As this is not part of the Green Route proposals the costs are not included in the scheme costs and would require an additional £9.7 million of public money albeit from the Highways Agency. This work is not currently included within the Highways Agency ten year forward plan and it is not known when or if it might be given sufficient priority to be taken forward.

On the completed questionnaire, comments relating to the replacement of M6 Junction 34 were one of the most frequently stated, at around 20% of the approximately 4,000 comments submitted. Many members of the public considered that the cost comparison was not "even handed", particularly as the current M6 Junction 34 is notoriously sub-standard with dangerous features and in urgent need of replacement anyway.

With regard to the possibility of a contribution to a northern Orange Route in respect of the improvement of Junction 34 the Highways Agency are unable to indicate any commitment at this stage. However, Government Office for the North West has indicated that their assessment of any proposal for funding would take into consideration the total cost to the public regardless of whether funding was through the Local Transport Plan or the Highways Agency. Using this technique would lead to the conclusion that the Green Route plus remodelling Junction 34 would be a more expensive option than construction of the Orange Route. However, the addition of a bridge crossing to Luneside to the Orange Route scheme would bring the costs back close to balancing.

## **Traffic Congestion**

Both routes will provide significant reductions in congestion, however the reductions in flows on existing routes vary between the two schemes.

The Green Route provides large reductions on the A6 south of Lancaster but does lead to increased flows on the A588 between its junction with the new road and the City.

The Orange Route provides relief to Carnforth the A5105 Coastal Road and A683 Caton Road.

Both routes are forecast to reduce traffic flows across Skerton and Greyhound Bridges by approximately one third. However, the Green Route is forecast to remove

more traffic from the King St/Thurnham St Gyratory System. Government policy does not encourage increased capacity for car travel into cities and it will be the intention to demonstrate that these reductions will be used to deliver improved bus priority and improved conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. New more detailed traffic modelling of the City Centre highways will be required before any detailed measures can be finalised. Data collection for this work has taken place recently. Clearly there will be greater scope to accommodate these measures with the Green Route. The greater reductions in traffic on King St/Thurnham St are forecast largely as a result of local traffic making journeys from Morecambe /Heysham to south Lancaster via the new route.

### **Public Transport Provision**

The County Council has commenced the introduction of a Quality Bus Partnership for Routes 3 and 4 between Heysham and the University. Routes 1 and 2 are proposed for introduction in 2003/04. The provision of a link road will provide an opportunity to provide greater levels of bus priority for the City.

Park and ride provision could be made in association with each of the routes. Under current guidance Park and Ride sites should be located so as to attract drivers from more distant points and local rural areas. Local urban movements should be encouraged to use public transport for the whole journey. The most appropriate site with a Green Route would be at Luneside which would have good access from the south. Park and Ride could also be provided near Junction 34.

With an Orange Route appropriate sites would be near Junction 34 and also on the A6 in the area of the University. There may be potential for some joint Park and Ride/University bus services.

### **Accessibility**

The computer modelled changes in off-peak journey times between the three local motorway junctions (M6 Junctions 33, 34 and 35) and locations in Heysham and Morecambe with the Green and Orange Routes are:--

	Heysham		Morecambe	
	Green Route	Orange Route	Green Route	Orange Route
M6 Jct 33	7 min reduction	4 min reduction	4 min reduction	4 min reduction
M6 Jct 34	No improvement	4 min reduction	No improvement	3 min reduction
M6 Jct 35	No improvement	4 min reduction	No improvement	3 min reduction

These times are generated using the Government's standard COBA assessment programme to indicate potential time savings but no single actual journey would be expected to reflect these times. The Green Route may provide some additional off peak time savings for journeys to the south through the use of roundabouts rather than traffic signals on the existing routes and on the Orange Route.

Access into Lancaster along A683 Morecambe Road east of existing north-east terminal junction of the Heysham to M6 Link adjacent to the Lancaster and Morecambe College would be improved by the reduction in traffic (10,200 AADF and 8,000 AADF at 2008 Opening Year for Green and Orange Routes respectively). Access along Morecambe Road should be marginally better with the Green Route than with the Orange Route.

Along B5321 Torrisholme Road/Lancaster Road the traffic would reduce slightly more with the Orange Route (4100 AADF reduction at 2008 Opening Year) compared to the Green Route (2200 AADF reduction at 2008 Opening Year). However, the incorporation of traffic signals at the limited movements junction between the Orange Route and the B5321 would mean that access along this road would probably be marginally better with the Green Route.

With the Green Route A588 Ashton Road is seen as a new access into south Lancaster for traffic from both north and south of the River Lune. The forecast 2008 Opening Year increase in traffic on the A588 of up to 67% is a cause for concern as this road has a poor alignment, limited footway provision, on-street parking, direct access for a school and nursery and ongoing development alongside. Further investigation of measures to mitigate the impacts of traffic on this route will need to be undertaken if a Green Route is selected. Traffic on the A588 will not be increased with the Orange Route.

### **Strategic Traffic Movement**

Of the traffic crossing Skerton and Greyhound Bridges 34% is travelling to or from the M6 or to the A683 east of the M6.

Non-local traffic movements have been examined by defining a cordon north of M6 Junction 35, south of M6 Junction 33 and east of M6 Junction 34 (excluding Halton). Strategic traffic to/from the Morecambe/Heysham peninsula is split as follows:-

- |    |                          |     |
|----|--------------------------|-----|
| a) | to/from south (M6 etc) - | 51% |
| b) | to/from north (M6 etc) - | 34% |
| c) | to/from east (A683) -    | 15% |

The Green Route would attract only the 51% of the non-local traffic between the peninsula and the south via M6 etc. The remaining 49% of this traffic, i.e. the 34% to/from the north via M6 etc and the 15% to/from east via A683, would continue to use their existing routes because a better route would not be available. Traffic to/from the north via M6 etc would continue via Junction 34 through Lancaster or via Junction 35 through Carnforth, Bolton-le-Sands, Hest Bank and along the coastal road, with traffic to/from the east continuing along A683 through Lancaster.

The Orange Route with an improved M6 Junction 34 would, however, attract around 90% of all the non-local traffic between the peninsula and the south and north via M6 etc and the east via A683. The remaining 10% of traffic, a residual amount between the peninsula and the south and north via M6 etc, would continue to use their existing routes even through a new superior route would be provided.

The difference in forecast traffic flows at 2008 (Opening Year) between the Orange Route (29,300 to 25,500 AADF) and the Green Route (21,000 to 19,400 AADF) is indicative of the greater use of the Orange Route by strategic long distance traffic.

### **Safety**

The relative merits of the two standards of road, wide single carriageway and dual carriageway, lies with a dual carriageway road which is approximately 25% safer than a wide single carriageway road when comparing the rate of personal injury accidents (PIAs) per million vehicle miles used in the COBA evaluation.

## **Halton Training Camp (MOD)**

The previous northern Orange Route crossed the Army camp and its severance of the camp was not acceptable to the Army and was stated as one of the County Council's reasons for not adopting the route. The currently proposed Orange Route no longer severs the camp and would only impinge on the extreme eastern edge of the camp adjacent to the M6, which is presently wooded. MOD Defence Estates for the Army no longer maintain their strong opposition to the Orange Route although they prefer the Green Route because it would have no effect on the camp.

## **Access to Glasson Dock**

In 1999, 112,000 tonnes of goods were shipped through Glasson Dock compared with 3,370,000 tonnes through Heysham. This represents slightly over 3% of the tonnage of the two ports. However access to the port does have local implications.

The present 10.1km signed route for HGVs from M6 Junction 33 to Glasson Dock is south along A6, along C448 and B5272 to Cockerham and then along the A588 and B5290 to Glasson.

With the Green Route a 9.4km replacement HGV route would be available using the Green Route the A588 and B5290.

With the Orange Route the existing 10.1km signed HGV route would remain. However, with the development of the Whinney Carr and Lawson's Bridge housing sites incorporating a new bridge over the West Coast Main Line (WCML) railway an alternative 11.9km route would be available using the development distributor road to link from the A6 to the A588. The 1.2km distributor road through the housing site is designated as a bus route with access restricted to side road junctions only and no frontage access. The use of this distributor road for an alternative route may have advantages.

## **Future Scheme Development**

Government Office for the North West has indicated they would require the local plan inquiry to be reopened for either route to be added to the Local Plan and that they would expect any major environmental issues to be resolved prior to inclusion of a route in the Local Plan. In the case of the Green Route this would mean that a river study would be necessary before the scheme could be proposed for addition to the Local Plan. This study is estimated at £100,000 and would take 9 months to complete. If this study concluded that there was no impact on the integrity of the site or identified possible cost effective measures to mitigate the impacts on the Special Protection Area the next stage would be to proceed with a full environmental data collection and appraisal to support a planning application. This would take around 18 months and cost approximately £400,000. The two studies could be run concurrently to reduce delay but, in view of the difficulties expected in determining a viable bridge that does not have a significant impact on the Special Protection Area and the potential for other impacts on the SPA being revealed through the environmental assessment, this would risk considerable abortive cost.

With the northern Orange Route, if the suggestion of a new river crossing to access Luneside is adopted there will be a need for further investigation, possibly including a river model, and additional consultation to establish the best location for a crossing. The costs of environmental appraisal for the Northern Route are estimated at £200,000 with a further £100,000 if river modelling is required.

Following the Planning Application the Side Roads Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders will be published and a Public Inquiry held. The bid made to Government for funding of the scheme will need to be updated each year, through the Local Transport Plan Annual Report, as the scheme is developed. Once the Government is satisfied with the principle of the proposal it may be given a provisional acceptance. When the scheme has completed the statutory procedures and the funding arrangements, which may be via the PFI route, have been settled, the scheme would then obtain full approval from Government.

## Cost Summary

The following table sets out the potential costs associated with each scheme and the various options included in this report.

Cost Summary	Green Route	Orange Route
Basic Scheme Cost	£59.4 million	£62.1 million
Cost of Improvements to M6 Junction 34 (Responsibility of the Highways Agency)	£9.7 million	Included
Cost of additional crossings to access Luneside West	N/A	£5 -£13 million
Cost of dualling if required in future.	£27 million	N/A
Cost of reducing bridge piers from 9 to 4	£16 million	N/A

## Conclusion

In reaching a decision on the proposed route for a highway there are numerous issues that need to be taken into account. These include the public's views on the scheme together with the environmental impacts on both the natural and built environment, the potential benefits to the local economy through reduced delays, inward investment and the ability to promote other associated transport improvements. It will also be important to ensure the proposal complies with the requirements of current planning and environmental legislation and is a scheme that is likely to receive funding from central government.

Both schemes have advantages and disadvantages and public opinion expressed in the MORI survey is split, whilst the consultation response favours the green route. The cost of the two schemes and the numerical cost benefit analyses are similar.

Both proposals address the key strategic aim to improve communications between Morecambe/Heysham and the M6 motorway in order to release land allocated for

industrial regeneration and improve access to the Port of Heysham. However only the western Green Route additionally provides access to the Luneside regeneration site.

The Green Route diverts more traffic from the City Centre which would provide more opportunity to promote sustainable modes. It would open up local movements between Morecambe/Heysham and South Lancaster.

The Green Route is, however, a single carriageway with a limited capacity that may reduce its potential to fully realise the strategic objectives in the long term. The forecast traffic levels at maximum recommended levels could lead to problems in obtaining funding from Government. The Green Route serves only journeys to the south.

There are also serious environmental issues surrounding the Green Route, particularly its proximity to an internationally protected area, that may well prevent the scheme being progressed. Also there are protected species present and significant impacts on the rural landscape.

The northern Orange Route is a shorter dual carriageway proposal with adequate capacity for the future and provides a link for traffic to and from the north, south and east. The scheme also provides a replacement of the substandard M6 Junction 34 and is forecast to give a greater reduction in road casualties.

The Orange Route runs through a built up area at its western end and as a result has more properties between 100m and 300m from the route.

The consultation has led to the consideration of a possible additional crossing of the Lune to access the Luneside West development area in conjunction with the northern route at an additional cost of £5 million to £13 million depending on location and bridge type.

From this analysis both the Green Route and the Orange Route with the additional crossing of the Lune would meet the objectives of the scheme, but with different advantages and disadvantages for each scheme. In view of the concerns expressed by Government Inspectors following the Structure Plan and Local Plan Inquiries, the views of Government Office, the potential impacts on the Special Protection Area which may lead to a veto on the western Green Route under the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994 and other environmental concerns, the likelihood of progressing the Western Route would appear limited. Whilst the Orange route will no doubt face some considerable opposition it is unlikely to meet any barriers that cannot be resolved through careful design of measures to mitigate the impacts, though any additional associated bridge crossing would need detailed consideration.

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## **CONSULTATIONS:**

A Public Consultation in July, August and September 2001 received over 15,500 responses which have been considered in preparing the report.

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**ADVICE:** As included in Background

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## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:**

The report considers two scheme options and the possible addition of a bridge crossing of the Lune, to access Luneside, in conjunction with the northern Orange Route.

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**IMPLICATIONS:** E.g. Financial, Legal, Personnel, Human Rights, Crime and Disorder or Other

This item has the following implications:

### **Human Rights**

The proposed routes will have impacts on human rights issue and these considerations are an integral part of the report.

### **Crime & Disorder**

May have some implications. The police have been consulted and their view incorporated into the report. Detailed issues will be considered as part of the design process.

### **Legal**

The proposed scheme will be required to complete statutory procedures for highway proposals and may be subject to legal challenge.

### **Financial**

The scheme will require substantial capital investment and has been bid to Government as part of the Local Transport Plan process. This bid will need to be updated through the annual progress reports.

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## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985** **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<u>Paper</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Contact/Directorate/Ext</u>
Local Transport Plan	July 2000	Ray Worthington Environment Directorate 3718
Local Transport Plan Settlement	14 December 2000	
Lancashire Structure Plan	1991-2000	
Lancashire Structure Plan Examination in Public Report of the Panel.	October 1995	
MORI Heysham to M6 Link Survey	August-September 2001	
Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the North West	July 2000	

Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the North West Public Examination Report of the Panel	13 Feb-2 March 2001
Lancaster Local Plan Inspector's report	June 2000
Lancaster Local Plan Response to the Inspector's Report and proposed Modifications	June 2001
Heysham M6 Public Consultation Brochure	June – September 2001
Objection to Lancaster local plan Proposed Modifications relating to the Heysham M6 Link Road by Government Office for the North West.	1 August 2001
The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994	30 October 1994
Letter from English Nature	24 October 2001
English Nature guidance Note to Local Authorities in the North West Team Area on European Protected Species.	September 2001
Stage 2 Level Environmental Assessment for Heysham to M6 Link options.	1997
TA 46/97 Economic Assessment and Recommended Flow Ranges. DTLR	February 1997
Statement by Geraldine Smith MP	September 2001
Statement by Hilton Dawson MP	29 August 2001
Letter from North West Development Agency	2 November 2001



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE NORTH WEST



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



The Chief Planning Officer  
Lancaster City Council  
Palatine Hall  
Dalton Square  
Lancaster  
LAI IPW

1st August 2001

Your ref:  
Our ref:

Dear Sir

**Lancaster District Local Plan; Proposed Modifications  
relating to the Heysham M6 Link Road**

Thank you for the consultation documents relating to this additional proposed modification to the Local Plan.

Objection is made on behalf of the Secretary of State to the modification, as detailed in the attached schedule.

For the avoidance of doubt I should make it clear that this objection does not alter the position of GONW regarding the principle of a Heysham M6 link being built. It remains the case that we are not convinced that the western route is the right option on grounds of public acceptance, environmental and traffic impact, or (in its reduced form) providing for the growth of the Port of Heysham.

Please note that our comments contained in the schedule are made without prejudice to the exercise by the Secretary of State for the Transport, Local Government and the Regions of any of his powers in relation to the plan proposals or to his consideration of any subsequent changes the authority may suggest.

Yours faithfully

Christopher Bamber  
Senior Planning Officer

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## **Objection is made to the Proposed Modifications relating to the Heysham M6 Link Road on the following grounds.**

These comments are made in the context of the deliberations which have already taken place, particularly at the Local Plan Public Inquiry. The question of whether there should be a Heysham-M6 Link has been fully considered. It is incorporated within the Structure Plan and in Draft Regional Planning Guidance.

The Modifications here proposed put forward one solution to the completion of the link. They are put forward at the same time as a public participation exercise, being carried out by the County Council, which canvasses views on that solution (the western route) against the alternative northern route. It is understood that there has been a previous consultation into four alternatives (three routes plus a "no road" option), and that the route currently proposed was the least popular of those alternatives.

The Inspector's Report made it clear that what was at issue was not the principle of the road, which he accepted, but the way in which the Deposit Draft Plan dealt with the proposal:

- the unacceptability of having reservations for two alternatives (which by then the Council had addressed by deciding on the western route);
- the preference for the western route in spite of the northern route apparently being environmentally preferable;
- his doubts as to whether the western route could be built within the Plan period, given its cost. This was critical in his recommendation not to make a reservation in the Plan. He made it clear that he would have been willing to accept a reservation for the northern route.

The first of these concerns had already been addressed by deciding on one route, which removes the ambiguity of the Deposit Draft.

### **Environmental impact**

Reference is made on page six of the Modifications to the "European Union habitat regulations". (Strictly the reference should be to their enactment in UK law by The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994). Regulation 69 "Construction of Highways and Roads" refers to Regulations 48 and 49 as applying. Regulation 49(1) refers (in the event of negative impact) to "... there being no alternative solutions ...". The solution proposed here incorporates a river crossing immediately adjacent to a European site, while there is an alternative which has no effect on the site. Dismissal of the alternative at this stage, without a proper comparative environmental assessment, is therefore premature.

### **Adequacy of the route proposed**

The third of the Inspector's points is addressed in this proposed modification by reducing the specification from dual to single carriageway. (The specification for the northern route cannot be similarly reduced because it would be projected to carry more traffic, which is in itself telling). At this specification the western route is projected to be at or close to capacity when it opens, thus compromising the strategic objective of improving access to the Port of Heysham so as to facilitate the growth of the port. The larger area of development land which would be opened up by this route is noted as a benefit of the western route, but that is not a strategic objective of the Heysham-M6 Link.

The northern route appears to offer greater benefits on almost every other count, including greater casualty savings, fewer residential properties affected (when the Scotforth Link is

taken into account), less farm land affected, and fewer sites of biological value affected. It also offers time savings to all three M6 junctions mentioned, compared to only one via the western route.

It is noted that the western route does offer greater projected reductions in traffic in the city centre. It has not been established, however, that the smaller but still substantial reductions arising from the northern route would compromise the traffic management and accessibility reductions which have been proposed. At the critical Lune bridges the difference in traffic reduction is marginal between the two routes.

### **Grounds of objection**

1. It is premature to propose the adoption of the route proposed when there has still not been a proper comparative assessment against the alternative.
2. The absence of such assessments from the reasoned justification for the proposal, along with the underlying implication of the modification that only the route favoured by the Council meets the strategic objectives referred to, is misleading.
3. Given that the balance of advantage appears to lie with the northern route on most counts, the preference for the western route appears perverse.
4. The ability of the western route to meet the terms of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 is questionable when compared with the northern route.
5. It is not acceptable to adopt one route subject to environmental appraisal when detailed proposals are brought forward, when there will have been another option which may be environmentally preferable, but which would not be taken into account in that appraisal. This would not meet the stipulation of PPG12 (4.17) that appraisal should be part of the plan preparation process.
6. The route as specified would appear to be expected to be at or close to capacity from the date it opens. This compromises its ability to meet the strategic objective of the road, which as its title implies is intended to ease access to the Port of Heysham. The alternative route with its higher capacity would appear better suited to achieve this objective in the longer term.

# Summary of Findings

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## Key findings

Whilst residents are supportive of the proposal for a road link, there is no clear preference across the City Council area for one or other of the two routes. Broadly speaking the Green route is preferred by residents in Morecambe and Heysham itself, who find this option more convenient, and the Orange route is favoured by those who are more sympathetic to the environmental impact: young people, people in ABC1 social groups and those living in rural areas (some of whom would be negatively affected by the Green route).

Though the findings are not conclusive in terms which route is preferred, they do show that the new road link has broad support in the community and they highlight the main reasons for supporting one route or the other.

The consultation document has effectively reached most households, with three in four of our respondents having seen it – a high score in MORI's experience

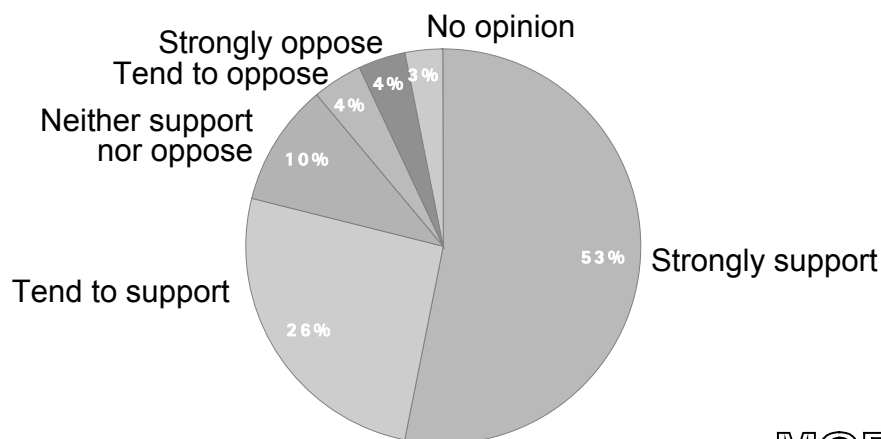
## General Attitudes Towards the Road Link

In principle, residents in Lancaster broadly support construction of a link road between Heysham and the M6. Over half (52%) strongly support the link and a further 26% tend to support it. Just 8% are in opposition to the scheme. Support is strongest in the Morecombe and Heysham areas but falls in those areas potentially affected by the road; in the 'Rural South' support falls to 53% and in 'Lancaster North' to 62%.

## In Principle Support

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**Q** *In principle, how strongly do you support or oppose the building of a road link between Heysham and the M6?*



Base: All respondents (997)

MORI

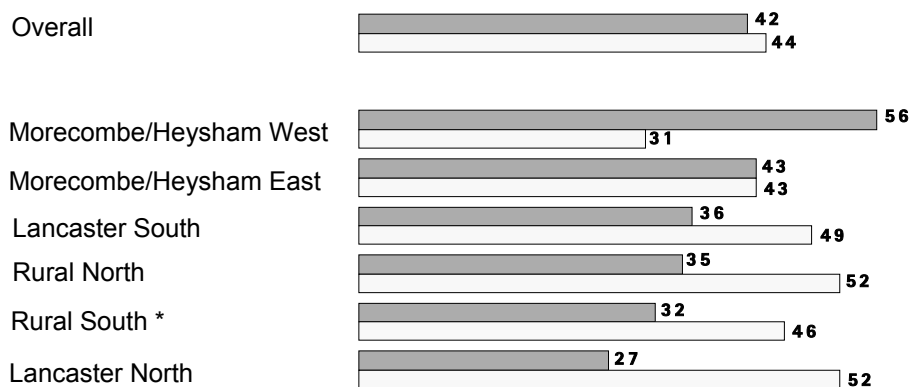
MORI

There is no clear preference for one or other of the routes, with residents almost completely split; 42% favour the Green route and 44% favour the Orange (this difference is not statistically significant). However, this apparent equal split hides important local differences; in Morecombe and Heysham the Green route tends to be favoured, and in all other areas it is the Orange route which is preferred.

## Overall Preference

**Q Could you tell me which route you would prefer overall?**

■ % Green route □ % Orange route



Base: All respondents (997) \* small base

MORI

For residents, the main criterion for deciding where to build the link should be the effect on traffic levels (46%), followed by the impact on the natural environment (32%), and the effect on those living near it (28%). Whilst 'traffic levels' is fairly consistently selected across sub-groups, there is variation in the proportion selecting 'environmental concerns': 41% of ABs select this criterion compared to 27% of DEs. Perhaps understandably, people living in rural areas are also more likely to select these criteria.

## Green vs Orange Route

### Green Route

The Green route is supported by 56% of residents, though this falls to 49% when people are given more information about this option. Both support and opposition to the route is consistent across sub-groups, though as one might expect, opposition is particularly high in the rural south which would be affected by the route.

Main reasons for favouring the Green route are the sense that it would be most effective in reducing traffic congestion (33%) and that it would be more convenient (24%).

## Orange Route

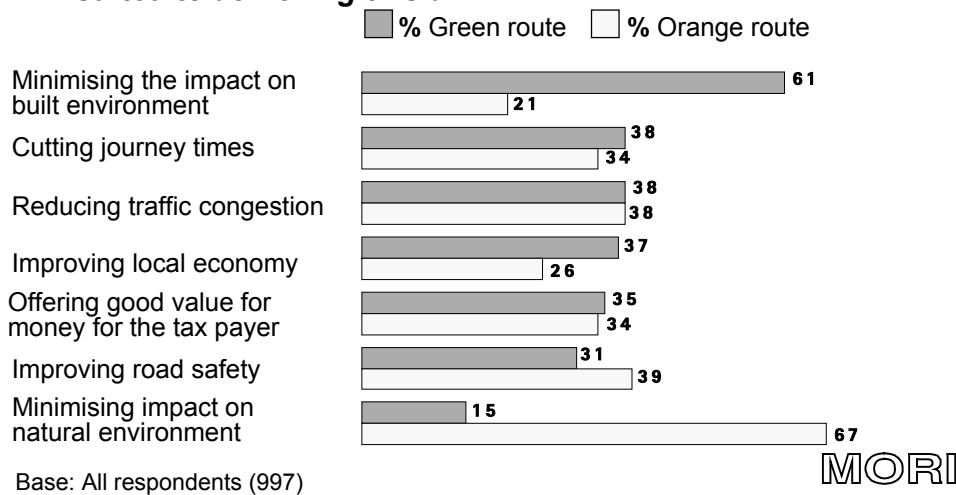
Support for the Orange route is initially slightly lower than the Green route at 44%, but this rises to 52% once more information is given. As above, both support and opposition for this route are consistent across sub-groups. Support for the Orange route tends to be based on the fact that it will be a dual carriageway (48%), and that it will have less impact on the natural environment (45%).

## Contrasting the two routes

Asked to assess the routes against each other by key criteria, both routes receive similar levels of support from residents for ‘cutting journey times’, ‘improving road safety’, ‘reducing traffic congestion’, and ‘value for money’. The main differences are found on ‘minimising the impact on the natural environment’, for which the Orange route is strongly seen as the best option, and ‘minimising the impact on the built-up environment (e.g. homes and shops)’, where the Green route is favoured. There is also slightly more support for the Green route in terms of improving the local economy.

## Comparison of Routes

**Q Could you please tell me which route you think is best suited to achieving this aim?**



## Awareness of the Proposals

Awareness of the proposals for the road link is fairly high with six in ten residents saying that they feel they know at least ‘a fair amount’ about the proposals. Conversely, only one in ten say that they have heard of the proposals but know nothing about them, and just four per cent have not heard about the proposals at all.

There are variations in awareness by gender – more men are familiar with the proposals than women – and by age, with only one in four 18-24 year olds feeling that they know at least a fair amount. Awareness increases with social class, and just half of those in social class DE feel they know ‘a fair amount’, compared to nearly three quarters of residents classified as AB.

## **Reaction to the Consultation Document**

Most residents recall having seen the consultation document – just one in five say they have not. Those in social class DE are less likely to have seen the document, as are people without cars. Distribution seems to have been fairly even across the area, though residents in Lancaster North are less likely to say they have seen the document (59%).

Those who have seen the document tend to be favourable towards it; 69% feel that it tells them all they need to know about the road link and 52% feel that it presents all views on the link fairly.

## **General Attitudes Towards Transport**

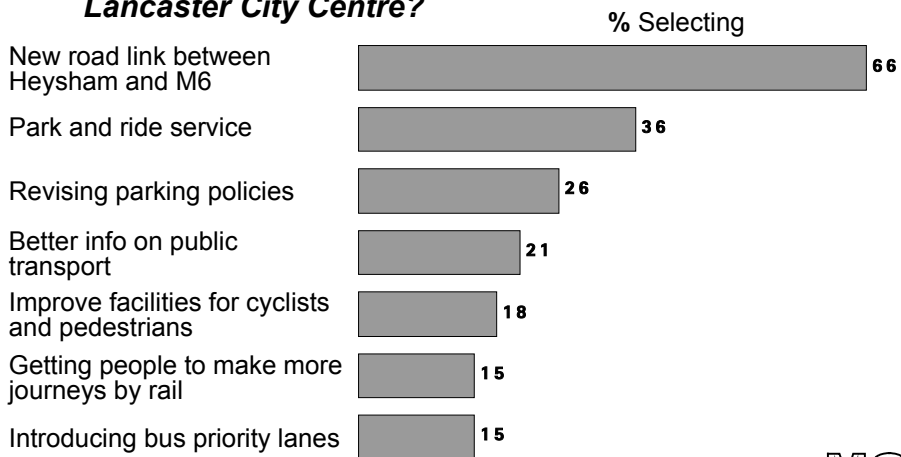
At the beginning of the questionnaire respondents were asked for their unprompted views on transport in the Lancaster area and how it could be improved.

Reducing road congestion is the key improvement residents want; this is selected from among a list of other improvements by 71% of our sample. The other improvement selected by a large proportion of residents is ‘improving public transport and other alternatives to the car’.

Two in three residents select ‘building a road link between Heysham and the M6’ as the main way to tackle traffic problems in Lancaster city centre. There is also substantial support for a park and ride scheme, selected by 36% of residents. People without cars are less likely to select the road link (40%) as are those who live in Lancaster North (57%), South (55%) and in the rural south of the City Council area (54%).

## Tackling Traffic Problems

**Q Which two or three of the following measures do you think are the most important to reduce the traffic problems in Lancaster City Centre?**



Base: All respondents (997)

**MORI**

Our Ref: RMCS/jg 0211-01

2 November, 2001

Mr. Max Winterbottom,  
Chief Executive,  
Lancashire County Council,  
County Hall,  
Preston,  
P RI SXJ.

Dear Max,

Proposed Heysham to M6 Link Road: Assessment of Alternative Route Options

You may know that over the last 6 months the Agency has been undertaking a detailed assessment of the two alternative routes being considered for the Heysham to M6 link road, particularly in relation to the objectives set in the Regional Strategy for this project.

This work has been carried out in close liaison and consultation with both the Environment Directorate of Lancashire County Council and the Chief Planning Officer of Lancaster City Council. I am grateful for their input and assistance.

The report is now being finalised. It establishes the NWDAs position on this issue and is intended to assist both yourselves and Government in coming to a decision.

We will be supporting the western route as the preferred option, delivering the most significant planning, regeneration and economic development benefits to the sub region.

The western route provides access to the Luneside area, an important regional and local regeneration opportunity which the northern route does not. It also better serves the University and the Bailrigg Business Park bringing strategic access benefits to both areas.

The western route removes twice as much traffic from Lancaster City Centre than the northern route. As you are aware Lancaster City Centre is seriously affected by through traffic which causes noise severance, visual intrusion and air pollution. All of these have a damaging effect on the prospects for achieving future regeneration in terms of housing development and attracting the Regional Strategy target sectors especially finance and professional services, tourism, creative industries and computer software. It is vital that an integrated traffic calming package is implemented within Lancaster City Centre in order to protect and sustain the traffic reduction benefits which would result from the construction of the road.

The finalised report will be with you shortly and I should like to invite your Authority to endorse its findings if you agree with them.

If you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me. Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Shields". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Mike Shields  
Chief Executive

Lancashire County Council M6 Link Public Consultation

I wish to submit the following points in support of the Green Route being retained as the preferred route for the proposed Heysham-M6 link road.

Originally planned as an illuminated dual carriageway costing £90 million, this scheme has been subject to considerable modification, which has led to a significant reduction in the estimated cost and substantially reduced its adverse environmental impact. This fact has been recognised by English Heritage who have stated in writing that they have no objections in principle to the Green Route being developed. Despite the reduced specification, the revised scheme retains virtually all the economic benefits and road congestion relief capabilities of the originally envisaged dual carriageway and it certainly outperforms the alternative northern route in virtually every aspect. It is cheaper, more cost-effective and provides greater relief from traffic congestion on the approach roads and within the city of Lancaster. Indeed it is the only route that fully addresses the area's problems and meets its needs.

A Green Route Heysham-M6 link will provide access to new and existing areas of employment in Morecambe, Heysham and Lancaster. This will considerably enhance the prospect of attracting much-needed new business and employment into areas of high unemployment and social exclusion. It will complement the assistance packages already provided by the Government and remove the biggest barrier to the regeneration of the area i.e. the appalling road links.

The new road is of particular importance to Heysham port, which is the fastest growing port on the north-west coast of England. It however faces severe competition from ports such as Liverpool, Holyhead and Stranraer and it would be a grave mistake to allow this flourishing enterprise to be strangled by poor road access.

The M6 link will provide much more than the economic benefits and regeneration opportunities to which I have referred will also relieve the awful congestion on the approach roads and bridges

into Lancaster and reduce dramatically the number of traffic movements within the city. It will bring environmental improvements to many thousands of people whose lives are currently blighted by traffic, noise and air pollution.

It will also enable the full implementation of the Lancaster transport strategy, which will introduce measures aimed at promoting alternative modes of transport in and around Lancaster, and bring about a significant reduction in road accidents and injuries.

The Heysham-M6 link will carry 20,500 vehicles a day over the River Lune and more than 16,000 vehicles a day south of Ashton road. It will remove 10,600 vehicles per day from Skerton Bridge, 9,700 vehicles per day from Greyhound Bridge and 15,300 vehicles per day from Morecambe road. The real significance of the traffic reductions is probably best understood by considering them as a percentage of the existing traffic levels. For example, traffic on the A6 will be reduced by 56% at Galgate and 57% at Scotforth. Traffic will be reduced by 27% on the city centre northbound gyratory road and by 23% on the southbound road. The A683 Morecambe road will benefit from a 37% reduction in traffic. The traffic on the Skerton and Greyhound bridges will be reduced by 33% and 30% respectively and the traffic on the A683 Caton road will be reduced by 25%.

These considerable reductions in traffic levels will allow the further introduction of bus priority measures, such as bus lanes over the Lune bridges, thereby improving timetable reliability, which will significantly increase the attractiveness of bus travel as an alternative to car use. It will also allow the extension of cycling facilities in the city centre. Reduced traffic levels will provide a much-improved environment for pedestrians and lower levels of noise and pollution. More than 10,000 properties will be subject to lower noise levels and almost 6,000 will benefit from better air quality. It is estimated that in excess of 30 road accidents a year will be prevented as a result of building the link road.

The estimated cost of the road is £59.4 million, and its net present value is more than £104 million, with a benefits-cost ratio of 3.577. If provided it will meet all of its stated objectives, which are - to improve communications between

Morecambe and Heysham and the M6 motorway; to release land allocated for industrial regeneration and improve access to the port of Heysham; to relieve traffic congestion in and around Lancaster city centre; and to permit the continued development of alternative travel modes, particularly buses and cycles. All in all, the Green Route Heysham-M6 link road represents a much-needed, value-for-money solution to the traffic problems that have blighted the Lancaster District for many years.

Finally, there is little doubt that the negative view taken by the local plan Inspector regarding the Green Route has given encouragement to supporters of a northern link. It is therefore extremely important that his report and associated recommendations are put into their proper context. They were produced from largely outdated evidence and took little or no account of the substantial changes made to the scheme. Additionally, the favourable view he appeared to take about a possible alternative northern route was not in any way based on a like with like comparison of the facts. It is quite clear that the Orange Route will not provide anywhere near the levels of traffic reduction in the City of Lancaster that Green Route offers. Also the Green Route will bring about substantially enhanced improvements in environmental health and road safety than those that the Orange Route would provide. Most importantly the Green Route is vastly superior as a catalyst for the economic regeneration of industrial development sites in Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham.

Further encouragement for supporters of the Orange Route has also been provided through Government Office North West submitting objections to the modified Lancaster District Local Plan. These objections are both contradictory and factually flawed. For example Objection 1 states that, "it is premature to propose the adoption of the route proposed when there has still not been a proper comparative assessment against the alternative." While Objection 3 states that, "given that the balance of advantage appears to lie with the northern route on most counts, the preference for the western route appears perverse." Government Office North West cannot on the one hand state that a proper comparison of the routes has not been carried and on the other state that the northern route is the best option. I have recently met with the civil servant responsible for submitting the objections and received an

assurance that the Green Route was still very much a live proposition. However, during our discussions it became clear that to gain their support for this scheme that a detailed comparison of both routes would need to be carried out. The North West Development Agency has recently concluded such a comparative study and will be shortly producing a report. In closing I would wish to summarise some of the key points.

### **Key Points Summary**

#### **1. Environmental Concerns.**

The Green Route does not impinge directly onto the SSSI, it simply passes close to it. Despite having made extensive enquiries I have been unable to find any evidence that such sites have statutory protection outside of their boundaries. Evidence of damage to the ecology and wildlife of the area is in the main speculative and emotive and any such damage is likely to be short term.

The damage caused to the health of people in the area by air and noise pollution is at an unacceptable level with families in the Skerton and Torrisholme areas being amongst the worst affected. It is high time that the health of local residents is put at the top of the agenda when environmental issues are being discussed. The Green Route clearly provides the greatest relief from the pollution problems.

#### **2. Economic Development**

The superiority of the Green Route over the Northern Route in terms of its economic regeneration potential is indisputable. It provides access to the Luneside employment area that is the core of the Lancaster District's bid for an economic development zone. It also provides access to the Bailrigg business park, Glasson Dock, Cockerham and Lancaster University. Lancaster District suffers from many areas of high social and economic deprivation and social exclusion. In order to uplift the lives and prospects of the people of these areas, it is vital that economic development opportunities are maximised.

#### **3. Public Consultation**

Despite the fact that the consultation document understating the importance of the economic benefits of the Green Route and overstating those of the Orange Route, the consultative exercise carried out by LCC showed a significant preference for

the Green Route. This confirms the results of numerous consultations I have conducted over the years on this issue. The fact that the small sample taken by Mori appears to show a more equal spread of opinion, is in my opinion a total irrelevance.

#### 4. Additional bridge over the Lune option.

The recent proposal to combine the Orange Route with an additional bridge over the Lune is really just a second best option and should be viewed as that. The fact that this option is being considered at all, clearly demonstrates that the Orange Route is inadequate to meet the needs of the Lancaster District and throws into question the judgement of those who recommended that it be adopted as the preferred route. The only acceptable site for an additional bridge would be at or near to the point where the Green Route Bridge would be built. Whilst a bridge at this point would provide access to the Luneside Employment Area it would still fall far short of the access provided by a completed Green Route. The cost of this bridge and an Orange Route Link would far exceed that of the Green Route. Serious consideration of this option leads to the conclusion that it makes much more sense to simply build the Green Route.

#### 5. North West Development Agency Report.

Whilst the report of the detailed comparison of the alternative routes that the NWDA has undertaken is not yet to hand, they have made their conclusions quite clear. In a recent letter the Chief Executive states, "We will be supporting the western route as the preferred option, delivering the most significant planning, regeneration and economic development benefits to the sub region." He then goes on to itemise some of the reasons that led to this decision and concludes by inviting the County and Lancaster City Council's to endorse his report.

I fully agree with the conclusion reached by the NWDA and I would therefore urge the County Council to reaffirm its support for the Green Route.

Geraldine Smith  
Member of Parliament