



Ruth Cadbury MP
Chair, Transport Committee
House of Commons,
London
SW1A 0AA

18 February, 2026

Dear Ruth,

Lack of transparency and accountability on road building costs

We are writing to alert the Committee about the continued lack of transparency regarding National Highways' major projects. In particular we would like to draw the Committee's attention to the failure of the Government to properly implement a recommendation it accepted from the Transport Committee's Strategic Road Investment report¹ to create a 'live dashboard' of National Highways' projects. We invite the Transport Committee to follow up this failure to implement the accepted recommendation with the DfT. This is even more urgent with the imminent publication of the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) in March.

Failure to implement agreed recommendation on 'live project dashboard'

The Committee's report vividly described the frustrating experience of attempting to gain clarity about National Highways' major projects, particularly with regard to latest cost estimates. The Committee called this "challenging", "not simple", and "not accessible or transparent" with information spread between multiple documents, and is often out of date. We have long shared the Committee's frustrations, especially surrounding the transparency regarding project costs, as set out in our response (attached and available on our website²) to the DfT's draft third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3).

The Committee recommended (Recommendation 8) that:

"The Government should work with National Highways to introduce a "live" project dashboard which provides up-to-date information on each project in the RIS 1, RIS 2 and subsequent RIS portfolios. The dashboard should provide information on original and

¹ [Strategic road investment Sixth Report of Session 2022–23](#), Transport Committee, July 2023

² [TAN response to the draft third Road Investment Strategy \(RIS3\)](#), November 2025

current: costs; Start of Work date; Open for Traffic date; and planning status (if applicable). (paragraph 68)

The Government accepted this Recommendation in its response³, acknowledging that it:

“recognised that there is an appetite for more frequent updates for the enhancements portfolio in a single dashboard format.”

The Government responded:

“The Government therefore agrees with the recommendation and will work closely with National Highways and the ORR, to explore the opportunity for more frequent public project reporting in one place.”

However, over two years since the Government accepted this recommendation, it has not been properly implemented. While the ORR has established a dashboard with scheme information, if it is not kept up to date and it contains no information on previous and latest costs.

Consequently there is still no transparency around the cost of schemes especially as National Highways’ website doesn’t contain up to date costs on scheme pages either.

- 1. We urge the Committee to ask the Government when it will properly implement Recommendation 8 for a live dashboard with up to date scheme costs and that this should be hosted on National Highways’ website where people would expect it to be.**

Need for transparency on enhancement scheme costs in RIS3

On 29 July 2024 the then Transport Secretary, Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP, ordered a capital spend review of DfT’s major projects. On 8 July 2025 the current Transport Secretary, Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, announced the outcome of this spending review, with 50 road and rail projects awarded funding. However, none of these road projects had up to date costs attached to them which was a serious omission.

Since then numerous MPs have asked Parliamentary Questions about the costs of National Highways’ projects included in the 8 July announcement, with different responses from ministers. In July 2025 Rt Hon Dame Priti Patel MP asked what is the “total estimated cost of each scheme” announced on 8 July 2025.

The response from roads minister Lilian Greenwood MP on 22 July 2025 restated that the government is “committed to providing transparency about our investment plans” adding that

“Scheme costs for the SRN schemes will be confirmed as part of the setting of the third Road Investment Strategy, planned to be published by the end of March 2026”.

However, since then roads minister Simon Lightwood has backtracked on this commitment in his answer to Jerome Mayhew MP on 26 January 2026 when he said that “RIS3 will not include

³ [Strategic road investment: Government response to the Committee’s sixth report](#), Eighth Special Report of Session 2022–23, October 2023

forecast costs for individual enhancement schemes”, directly contradicting the answer by Lilian Greenwood on 22 July 2025.

Individual scheme costs are not available via Parliamentary Questions, nor are they available on National Highways’ website. In the absence of the ‘live dashboard’ as recommended by the Committee (and accepted by the government), there is nowhere to examine scheme costs and track cost escalation.

A five-year Road Investment Strategy is *exactly* where there should be transparency on the latest cost estimates of enhancement schemes. Simply because previous RISs have not included individual enhancement scheme costs is not a good enough justification to continue this obfuscation.

The final RIS3 should include up to date cost estimates for the enhancement schemes to be built in the RIS3 period (2026-31), and in the RIS4 pipeline to be developed. Otherwise how can it possibly know whether the funds allocated are sufficient to deliver the listed schemes?

The final RIS3 is due to be published by the Department for Transport in March 2026.

- 2. We urge the Committee to write to the DfT as a matter of urgency requesting that individual enhancement scheme costs are included in the final RIS3, including those in the RIS4 pipeline.**

Need for greater transparency around all RIS3 budgets

It would assist greater transparency and understanding if there is a breakdown of the Operating, Maintenance and Renewals (OMR) budget within RIS3, to determine exactly how much is being spent on maintenance and renewals separately (a priority for road users), and not obscured by National Highways’ operating costs as it often is currently.

- 3. We urge the Committee to request a fuller and more detailed breakdown of the budgets contained in RIS3 and on any spending reported by National Highways**

Transparency on National Highways’ budgets is long overdue, and we would be grateful for the Committee’s assistance in gaining the necessary clarity for RIS3, especially on the latest cost estimates of road enhancements.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Todd
Director
Transport Action Network