



Rupert Furness,
Deputy Director, Roads Investment, Strategy and Environment
Department for Transport

30 April 2026

Dear Rupert

Re MRN / LLM funding arrangements

Transport Action Network is concerned about the funding repayment arrangements if a newly elected local authority wishes to cancel a Major Road Network (MRN) or Large Local Major (LLM) road project which has formally received Department for Transport funding. Any requirement to pay back DfT funding risks deterring local authorities from cancelling road projects that no longer represent value for money nor are viable, because they cannot take on additional debt.

With the local elections on 7 May 2026 we are likely to see many local authorities under different leadership with new priorities. It is unreasonable for local authorities to be saddled with commitments to refund DfT funding because of the bad decision making of a previous administration and because alternative options haven't been thoroughly examined.

This scenario has happened in Shropshire, where the newly elected Shropshire Council wished to cancel the controversial and unviable Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (NWRR) which had been progressed by a previous administration. The new council has been forced to take out a huge loan to pay back the DfT funding given to the previous administration which will be borne by local council tax payers for decades to come.

The same scenario is likely to play out in Norfolk where the current administration remains committed to the controversial Norwich Western Link (NWL), despite the project failing to attain planning permission due to its significant environmental impacts. However, control of the

council is almost certainly going to change on 7 May. A new administration should be able to cancel the NWL if it is no longer a priority and it is unaffordable, without incurring significant costs.

- 1) We would like to know what the funding arrangements are for MRN / LLM road projects, and whether local authorities are required to repay DfT funding, and what are the penalties of cancelling a previously funded scheme.
- 2) We would like to know whether DfT has considered the risks that requiring repayment of DfT funding will deter local authorities from cancelling schemes that have become unviable or unaffordable?

DfT always used to routinely publish the grant confirmation letters when awarding funding to local authorities for road projects, which confirmed the terms and conditions of the grants. However, in recent years this practice has stopped. The DfT stated this was because publication would “likely to have a detrimental effect on the LA [local authority] doing a fair procurement exercise”.

However, Regulation 4 of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) mandates that public authorities actively and systematically disseminate environmental information they hold. If necessary certain financial information could be redacted to protect the procurement process. However, there is no justification for withholding them given they have previously been published, and are of public interest due to the impacts on the environment and on public funds.

- 3) We would like DfT to publish the grant confirmation letters for all schemes that are in and have previously been in the MRN / LLM programme.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Lush
Roads Campaigner

Transport Action Network