



Department
for Transport

28 JUN 2016

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Andrew Jones MP

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Our Ref: [REDACTED]
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D. LI. Roberts
HM Senior Coroner
County of Cumbria
Fairfield
Station Street
Cockermouth
Cumbria
CA13 9PT

27 JUN 2016

Dear Mr Roberts,

Thank you for your letter 4 May to the Secretary of State regarding the inquest into the deaths of Michael and Tony Jopson. In your letter you explain that this was the first of two accidents on the A66 within three weeks. You state that action should be taken to prevent future deaths by upgrading A66.

In December 2014 the Government published the first Road Investment Strategy (RIS) which marked a step change in investment in the strategic road network and committed over £15bn of expenditure in the period to 2020. The RIS also acknowledged that some of the challenges and opportunities facing the network are too large and too complex to fix in a single Road Period. Building on the feasibility study approach adopted in preparation for the RIS, the Government commissioned a series of new strategic studies, to address the biggest challenges facing the road network. One of these studies is the Northern Trans Pennine study, covering the A66 and A69.

Both roads have a mix of high-quality dual carriageway and single carriageway. The aim of the study is to examine the case for dualling one or both of these roads and making other improvements along their length. Consultants were appointed in the summer of 2015 and will report their findings in the autumn of 2016. An initial report was published in March 2016 and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-trans-pennine-strategic-study-interim-report>. This sets out the key findings and need for intervention.

The Chancellor announced in the 2016 Budget his commitment to upgrade the A66 and A69. The budget also announced the allocation of £75m from the Transport Development Fund to take forward the more promising recommendations from this and two other strategic studies in the north of England to enable construction to commence in the second Road Period after 2020.

The A66 forms part of the strategic road network. Working with the Department for Transport, Highways England maintains, operates and improves that network. As part of Highways England's role as network operator it carries out a review of the safety of a route each year. Personal Injury Accident (PIA) data for a five year period is looked at. This review informs the development of Highways England's safety study and improvement programme.

Ahead of any major upgrade to the route, safety improvements at the following locations on the A66 between the M6 and the Durham Boundary are to be delivered this financial year:

- A66 Brougham where works to introduce a right turn lane were completed in April
- A66 Kirkby Thore where average speed cameras are to be installed by mid July
- A66 Appleby to Brough where a package of measures are currently being introduced. These include an upgrade to the road traffic signs and road markings, an extension of the double white line system at Sandford and Warcop, installation of safety barriers in the road side verge. A reduction in the speed limit to 50 mph is also proposed. There has been an objection to the proposed lower speed limit. The objection is currently being considered and a decision on whether to proceed with the proposed lower speed limit is expected by mid July.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Jones

ANDREW JONES