



Department
for Transport

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Our Ref: 323450

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 The HRE Group

Dear 

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2020, addressed to the Minister of State, about the Historical Railways Estate (HRE). Your enquiry has been passed to the Correspondence Team, Strategic Roads division for a response.

In consideration of the concerns raised in your correspondence, let us begin by clarifying the arrangement of funding for the HRE. Highways England is funded for the management of the HRE outside of the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) settlement announced at the recent Spending Review (SR20). Funding of the HRE forms part of the Department's Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (RDEL), and SR20 confirmed RDEL for 2021-22. However, no decisions have yet been made as to the level of HRE funding within the RDEL settlement, and this is being considered alongside other priorities. Funding for the HRE beyond 2021-22 will need to be considered in SR21.

You have also raised Highways England's management of HRE structures. In order to maintain the safety of both communities living close to them and the drivers who use the roads that cross them, Highways England is planning to infill 115 bridges and remove 15 structures over the next five years. Most of the bridges earmarked for infilling are over 100 years old and were never designed to carry the weight of modern traffic.

Local highway authorities have responsibility for applying weight restrictions, closing the roads, or restricting traffic. Approximately 200 of the public road bridges managed by Highways England have failed their most recent structural assessment, but have not had any restrictions implemented. Therefore, Highways England's planned infilling is the safest and most appropriate option and will maintain access across the structure.

Highways England also contacted all local authorities affected to advise them of its plans, and to see if they have any use for the structures. In addition, it has arranged for seven structures to be transferred to local authorities which aspire to use them for cycle routes.

Thank you for taking the time to write in with your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Correspondence Team, Strategic Roads, Economics and Statistics