

Strategic
Design Panel
progress report

5



Good road design:

makes roads safe and useful

is inclusive

makes roads understandable

fits in context

is restrained

is environmentally sustainable

is thorough

is innovative

is collaborative

is long-lasting

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Improving Hull's public realm alongside Murdock's Connection over the A63.



Foreword



Since publication of the last progress report, our name may have changed to National Highways, but our design vision for an inclusive, resilient and sustainable road network remains the same. The challenges of climate change and biodiversity have also not changed, nor has the need to raise the quality of what we build and maintain.

To ensure good design becomes business as usual, we have continued to promote and embed our principles of good design through the publication of guidance and case studies this year. We have also continued to review our most sensitive and complex schemes and published a report on learning from design reviews undertaken to date. These publications will help us meet current design challenges and those ahead, and I encourage design teams to make use of these.

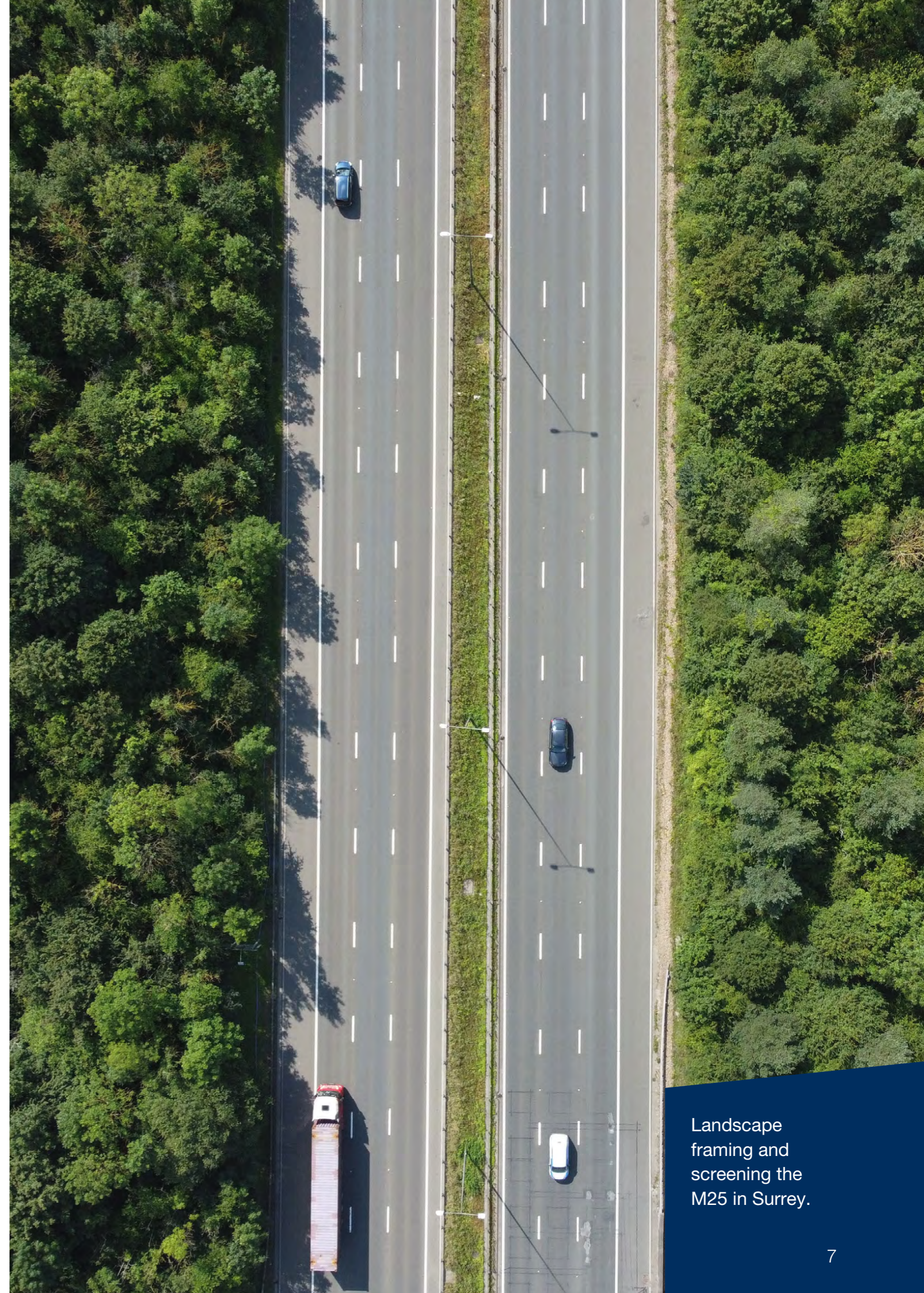
Our aim to put people at the heart of our work and respect the places through which our roads pass has also not changed. We must continue to improve our design processes to deliver for people and places and elevate the quality of the network. To ensure this happens, we will look to support design champions throughout National Highways to challenge poor design and promote the benefits of good design.

Over the past year we have reviewed the working of the Strategic Design Panel and considered how best to implement its recommendations more effectively and quickly. The findings of the review are outlined in this report, and we will make changes in the year ahead to ensure we continue to receive the best advice and act on it.

I would like to thank current and past members of the Strategic Design Panel, and the wide range of organisations they represent, for their valuable contribution in helping us deliver safer, better, beautiful roads to connect people and our country. I look forward to welcoming new members to continue to challenge us, raise aspirations and help us deliver our design vision for our roads.

Mike Wilson

Chief Highways Engineer and Chair of the National Highways Strategic Design Panel



Landscape framing and screening the M25 in Surrey.

Executive summary

This is the fifth report of the National Highways Strategic Design Panel (the Panel), which is tasked with challenging and supporting National Highways to improve the quality of England's strategic road network (SRN).

The Panel includes members from across a range of disciplines, representing designers and stakeholders who are committed to improving the design and quality of the SRN. This report sets out the Panel's progress over the past year (April 2021 to July 2022), makes key recommendations and looks ahead to the future.

Design review and advice

The independent design review panel (DRP) has continued to provide scheme specific design advice, as well as reporting strategic issues from reviews to the Panel. Following National Highways publication of a report on design review this year, the Panel recommends reviews continue to be undertaken by a separate design review panel under its direction.

Key recommendations

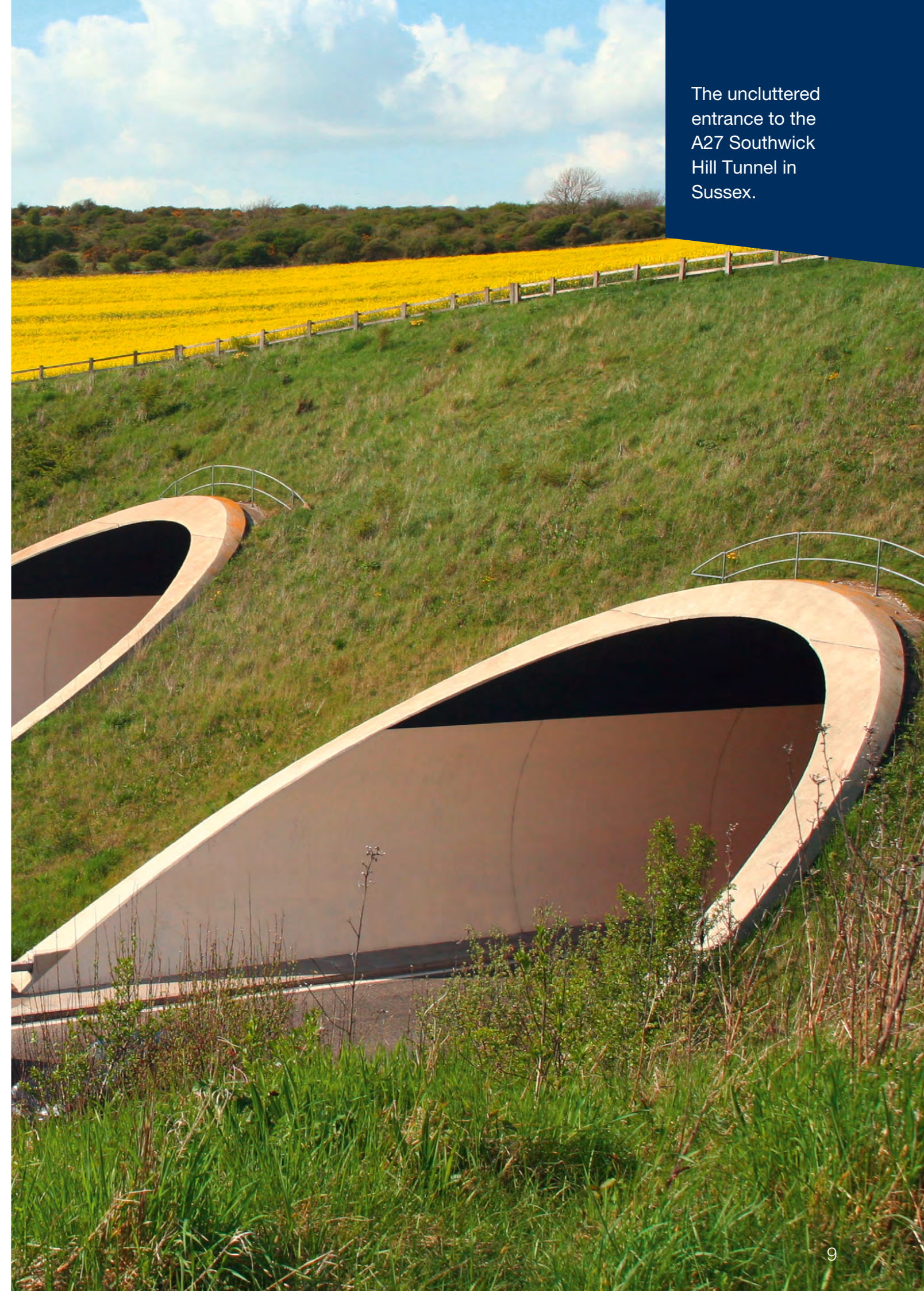
Over the past year, the Panel recommended National Highways:

- ensure the Panel becomes more effective following the review of its structure and membership.
- expand independent design review to ensure most schemes are considered.
- appoint 'design champions' to support change and improvement.

Looking ahead

Over the next year, membership of the Panel will change following the review. This new design panel will continue to support National Highways to promote and embed the principles of good design in practice so that they become 'business as usual'. The new panel will understand and make recommendations on highway clutter and support good design competitions that challenge current approaches and inspire innovation. The new panel will consider this work alongside issues emerging from the continued review of schemes.

The uncluttered entrance to the A27 Southwick Hill Tunnel in Sussex.



The Strategic Design Panel

The National Highways Strategic Design Panel (the Panel) is tasked with challenging and supporting National Highways to improve the quality of England's strategic road network (SRN). The Panel's role is to ensure that design excellence in landscape, engineering and built environment is considered in all National Highways' projects.

National Highways will achieve design excellence through the SRN being safe, functional and elegant, by responding positively and sensitively to landscape character, natural systems, cultural heritage and communities. The SRN should also meet National Highways' other goals for sustainable development, including being resilient to climate change, reducing carbon and supporting biodiversity.

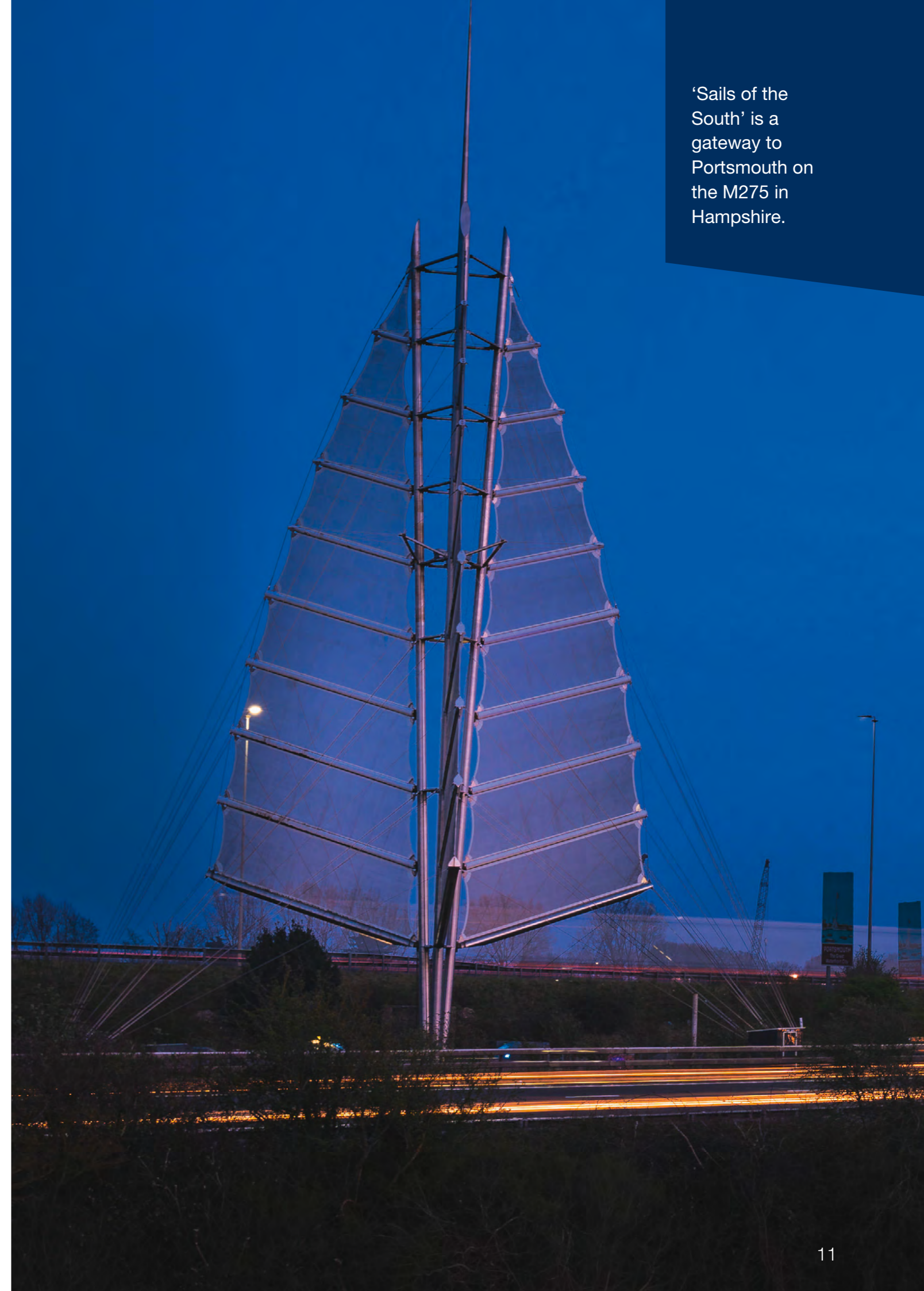
While the Panel's role is advisory, National Highways should seek and act on advice from the Panel to embed a design-led approach in its processes. This includes the design of road improvements, network management and operations, and in the development of relevant design standards and guidance.

Work

The work of the Panel takes place in the context of the government's road investment strategies. Over the past year (April 2021 to July 2022), the Panel has applied its advisory powers by:

- providing advice on embedding National Highways' design vision and principles
- reviewing and giving advice on National Highways standards and processes
- considering and making recommendations on the importance of design guidance and training
- reviewing and commenting on strategic and recurrent themes and issues associated with the design of road schemes
- overseeing the review of complex and sensitive schemes

'Sails of the South' is a gateway to Portsmouth on the M275 in Hampshire.



Membership

The Panel is made up of a wide range of stakeholders who have expertise in the delivery of well-designed infrastructure and a broad perspective on road design. The Chair has continued to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the Panel, and that National Highways considers and acts on its recommendations.

Current membership of the Panel includes:

- Chair: Mike Wilson *Chief Highways Engineer, National Highways*
- Silviya Barrett *Campaign for Better Transport*
- Phil Carey *Transport Focus*
- Dr Mike Cook *Institution of Structural Engineers*
- Colin Davis *Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation*
- Roland Diffey *Institution of Civil Engineers*
- Simon Robertshaw *National Trust*
- Noel Farrer *Landscape Institute*
- Paul Bate *Connected Places Catapult*
- John Lyall *Chair of the National Highways Design Review Panel*
- Selina Mason *Royal Institute of British Architects*
- Paul Miner *Campaign to Protect Rural England*
- Lindsay Whitley *Design Council*
- Rohan Torkildsen *Historic England*
- Deborah Hall *Natural England*

Over the course of the reporting period, the representative for some organisations changed. The Chair would like to thank past members Sue Morgan, Clare Warburton, Wayne Hutton, and Stephanie Evans for their valued contribution to the Panel.



The restored Wellington Monument in Somerset is a landmark on the M5.

Making progress

In the first progress report in 2017, the Panel identified its aspirations, made recommendations and set out several aims. Many of these long-term aspirations continue to be highly relevant.

National Highways has made further progress in establishing the context for change over the past year, through continuing to address previous Panel recommendations and aims, including publishing guidance and illustrating what good design looks like.

Actions

The Panel made three key recommendations in the fourth progress report and progress against these is detailed below:

- **National Highways should accelerate communication and training to embed its design vision and principles into its processes and culture.** A guide to the *The road to good design* which explains the 10 principles of good road design in detail, along with guidance on design for context and climate change, was published. The first series of case studies illustrating ‘what good looks like’ was also published, alongside a report on design review to date. A new National Highways Industry Award for good design has been introduced.
- **National Highways should act on the Panel’s recommendations for adapting to climate change, reducing carbon, supporting biodiversity and the design of corridors.** National Highways published its net zero highways plan, reported on preparing for climate change and has committed to no net loss in biodiversity in road period 2. Information on the design of corridors was included in the guide to *The road to good design* and has informed the design of new schemes such as the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine.
- **National Highways should publish a design strategy to clearly articulate its ambitions for the second road period and beyond.** Good road design is being incorporated into the development of a new overall strategy for environmental sustainability. This is due to be published next year.

Aspirations

The Panel has considered key aspirations in previous reports to help National Highways raise the standard of design. The Panel has reviewed and updated them again here, and recommend that they be carried forward so further progress can be made on:

- clear and consistent consideration of place and design quality at the earliest stage of scheme development
- building in greater flexibility to later stages of scheme design, within the constraints of the consenting process
- emerging schemes learning from completed schemes, and other parts of the built environment sector
- post-opening evaluation considering design principles
- recognising the importance of inter-disciplinary design
- designing for more than mitigation
- landscape-scale vision and early engagement of landscape professionals
- better quality design of essential common elements and features
- incorporating more green infrastructure and sustainable drainage
- more inclusive engagement with users and local communities
- better planning and design for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders
- inspiring innovation through design competitions and achievement through awards
- incorporating resilience to climate change and carbon reduction

Activities

The Panel developed a forward programme of activities to meet its aims set out in the first progress report. Progress continues to be satisfactory, but again some activities will continue:

- A fourth annual review of the Panel in May 2021 was undertaken and resulted in a more extensive examination of the work and membership of the Panel. This is outlined in section 4 of this report.
- Work to understand the reasons for highway clutter to be concluded and recommendations for change made so that improvements in the appearance of the network can be progressed.
- The publication of a guide to *The road to good design* was endorsed by the Panel, but work to embed good design into National Highways processes needs to continue. Further training and monitoring is required to ensure good design becomes 'business as usual' by the end of road period 2.
- Learning from best practice is on-going. Further good design case studies should be published and promoted to help expand the knowledge base and firmly set out 'what good looks like' as a client.



The use of weathering steel helps reduce maintenance of the A14 in Cambridgeshire.

Design review

Since its establishment in the autumn of 2017, the design review panel (DRP) has undertaken 34 scheme, guidance and standard reviews. The reviews to date have been facilitated by Design Council, an independent charity and the government's advisor on design, on behalf of National Highways.

The DRP comprises experts in transport planning, structural and civil engineering, architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, sustainability and other built environment fields. Individual review panels comprise a group of recognised experts appropriate to the scheme under review. The review of a scheme generally includes a site visit, although this has had to be adapted in response to the pandemic until recently.

Under the direction of the Panel, the DRP reviewed the A12 Chelmsford to A120, M3 Junction 9 and A2 Dover Access, and held follow-up reviews of the A417 Missing Link, Lower Thames Crossing, A66 Northern Trans-Pennine and A27 Arundel Bypass since the last progress report. Design evaluations of four completed schemes, including smart motorways (M6 J16-19 & M3 J2-4a), A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon, A19/A1058 Coast Road and M6 Junction 19 were also undertaken.

As well as providing scheme specific design advice, the DRP reports to the Panel on strategic issues emerging from reviews. As recommended in the Panel's fourth progress report, National Highways published a design review report on behalf of the Panel summarising findings from reviews 2017-2021. This report set out recommendations to National Highways to improve design quality and processes from the first period of reviews. Recommendations were made by category:

- actions to improve the design review process
- ways that project design teams can improve their approach
- learning for National Highways to improve the design process for roads projects

Table 1 – Recommended actions to improve the design review process and progress

Recommendation	Progress
Structure reviews to better address more clearly the ten principles of good road design.	Achieved with recommissioning of design review panel.
Ensure that the selection process for identifying projects for review remains rigorous, with the review selection criteria clearly set out.	Achieved with recommissioning of design review panel and publication of design review report.
Design opportunities and issues arising from different potential routes (on landscape, wider movement, setting, views) should be demonstrated.	Achieved with reviews of schemes at stage 2 now being undertaken.
Continue to use an independent DRP for scheme reviews, and investigate developing other models such as that used for completed schemes and use of design workshops.	Achieved, with design review panel recommissioned and further completed schemes evaluated and design workshops undertaken.
Undertake design evaluations of completed schemes designed following the publication of <i>The road to good design</i> .	Achieved with evaluations of schemes completed since publication now being undertaken.
Carry out detailed design reviews for specific infrastructure hardware, for example gantries or maintenance access areas	To be considered following study of highway clutter.
Consider more sequential reviews of major schemes through the various Project Control Framework (PCF) stages.	Achieved. Follow up reviews undertaken on most schemes reviewed to date.
Ensure briefing of the design team delivers benefits from the process, for example, appropriate display materials. Presenting teams should be encouraged to show rough early concept ideas and options at review, demonstrating the working process.	Achieved with publication of design review report and guidance.
Obtain better feedback from design teams on the review process.	In progress.

Table 2 – Recommended ways that project design teams can improve their approach and progress

Recommendation	Progress
Encourage project teams to incorporate the thinking set out in <i>The road to good design</i> . Use a place-centred approach which ensures landscape, heritage and biodiversity knowledge feeds into a design narrative, and ensure design teams incorporate landscape and architectural input from the early stages.	A guide to <i>The road to good design</i> published.
Clearly articulate a vision for each project, with a strong, confident design narrative. Schemes should be presented as a wider design opportunity, not just a solution to a traffic problem. Express and investigate opportunities, not just mitigation.	In progress. A review of the PCF project control framework underway to consider including a more evident design narrative.
Establish route corridor characteristics and design narrative. For example, appreciate the successive change in landscape character along a route.	In progress. Research into corridor design undertaken in 2020 and findings reflected in the guide to <i>The road to good design</i> .
Focus on the successive visual experience of the motorist and passengers in the design early on – what will they see?	In progress. Research into corridor design undertaken in 2020 and findings reflected in the guide to <i>The road to good design</i> .
Establish key views early on to understand long-distance changes to the landscape, and how the scheme is experienced up close.	In progress. Reference made in the guide to <i>The road to good design</i> .
Ensure wider walking, cycling and horse-riding networks are considered and improved as part of the design process.	In progress. Reference made in the guide to <i>The road to good design</i> .
Explore and use precedents of multi-disciplinary good design in infrastructure, with evidence of why they were successful.	In progress. First series of good design case studies published.
Explore the dynamic between the scheme objectives, the speed limits set by the client requirements and how the design for a scheme could evolve.	In progress. National Highways Strategy & Planning to consider.
Make more time for design detailing and consider it earlier in the process. Additionally, design needs to be carried out at an appropriate scale – details cannot be designed effectively at small scales.	In progress. A review to consider what detail is required for planning.

Table 3 – Recommended approaches that National Highways can adopt to improve the design process for roads projects

Medium term actions

Recommendation	Progress
Introduce a requirement for a design narrative into the PCF – ideally as part of stage 1.	In progress. A review of the PCF underway to consider including a more evident design narrative.
Improve design objective setting and introduce design principles at PCF stage 0/1. There is great scope for scheme objectives to think much more broadly about value. For instance, the value of landscape protection and enhancement, social and environmental sustainability, and improving health and wellbeing.	In progress. National Highways Strategy & Planning have introduced a requirement for considering design issues and design review at stage 0.
Establish the landscape characteristics and a design narrative for each SRN corridor, potentially as part of Route Strategy documents.	In progress. Research into corridor design undertaken in 2020 and findings under consideration by National Highways Strategy & Planning.
Each project should have a designated role of ‘design champion’ who ensures the design quality of the scheme.	In progress. Design champions to be appointed more widely in 2023.
Develop a mechanism for design exploration of the road user experience – a graphic communication tool that can be utilised at early design stages.	In progress. Research into corridor design undertaken in 2020 and findings reflected in the guide to <i>The road to good design</i> . Further work required to develop tool.
Use DMRB standard GG103 to instigate change away from mitigation led design to an opportunity place centred approach.	In progress. Reference made in the guide to <i>The road to good design</i> . Landscape design guidance also being prepared.
Create a case study resource, illustrating successful aspects of completed schemes as recommended previously.	First series of 25 case studies published.

Long term actions

Recommendation	Progress
Review the current process for community involvement in the design process. Consider more collaborative working and other approaches for supporting meaningful interaction.	In progress. Reference made in the guide to <i>The road to good design</i> .
Consider including a good design requirement within Client Scheme Requirements.	To be considered.
Where relevant, review changes to design teams between PCF stages to ensure design continuity and efficiency.	To be considered.
Review the composition of design teams. Investigate options for including an artist in the team for appropriate projects. Consider that the procurement of design teams includes landscape and architectural input from the earliest stages.	To be considered further. DMRB standard LD117 requires the appointment of a landscape professional from outset.

The Panel recommends that independent design reviews continue and further schemes, particularly those less complex or sensitive, should be reviewed. Design reviews should also be considered earlier in the process. Further evaluations of schemes built since the publication of the design principles should also be undertaken to monitor progress. This will help to improve design outcomes more broadly, and further embed the principles of good design.



The elegant lines of the M5 over the Exe Estuary in Devon.

Panel review

An annual review of the work of the Panel is undertaken each May to ensure it remains effective and meets the requirements of the National Highways Licence. The annual review in May 2021 revealed a number of issues and points of dissatisfaction.

A review of the Panel and its work was subsequently undertaken by the Bourton Group. This review also compared the approaches of HS2 and Network Rail to good design and design review.

Mainly informed through consulting members of the Panel, the review found there was a feeling of lack of progress on the ground (primarily due to the timescale of schemes) and confusion as to the role of 'design experts' and 'stakeholders' on the Panel. Members also felt that the full value of good design was still not widely understood or recognised throughout all of National Highways and its supply chain, and generally continued to be perceived as a 'nice to have'.

The review by the Bourton Group concluded that the Panel had 'plateaued' since publication of *The road to good design* and successful establishment of an independent design review process. A number of recommendations were made to help the Panel effectively achieve the next step change for good design before the end of road period 2.

From the review, four proposals to promote and embed good design and improve the working of the Panel were developed:

- Promote and embed good design
- Design review
- Design champions
- Improve working of the Panel

1. Promote and embed good design

Focus on promoting and embedding the principles of good design so they become 'business as usual' by providing advice, training and guidance.

This will ensure a broad definition of good design is recognised and wider benefits realised. The publication of a guide to The road to good design and also case studies to support best practice will assist, as would establishing a National Highways 'good design' award.

Learning sessions and materials should be produced to promote and embed good design and hosted on the National Highways website for ease of access. Advice notes to the Panel on key issues will support future guidance and learning.

2. Design review

Independently review more schemes and earlier in the design process by strengthening requirements for design review, with exceptions agreed by the chair of the Panel.

This will maximise benefits of design review and ensure it becomes 'business as usual'. Review Terms of Reference for design reviews and requirements and reporting after publishing a report on design review to date.

A guide to design review to be published and learning and support provided to teams. Support for independent design reviews and appointment of the DRP to the end of road period 2. A parallel review of the requirements of the Project Control Framework (PCF) should be undertaken with regard to good design and design review.

3. Design champions

Recognise the value of design and improve the quality of the SRN by appointing 'design champions' throughout National Highways as advocates of good design.

This will help promote and embed good design and meet a requirement of the National Infrastructure Strategy. Approach and roles across National Highways directorates to be agreed and training and support provided to ensure the need for and benefits of good design is given due regard.

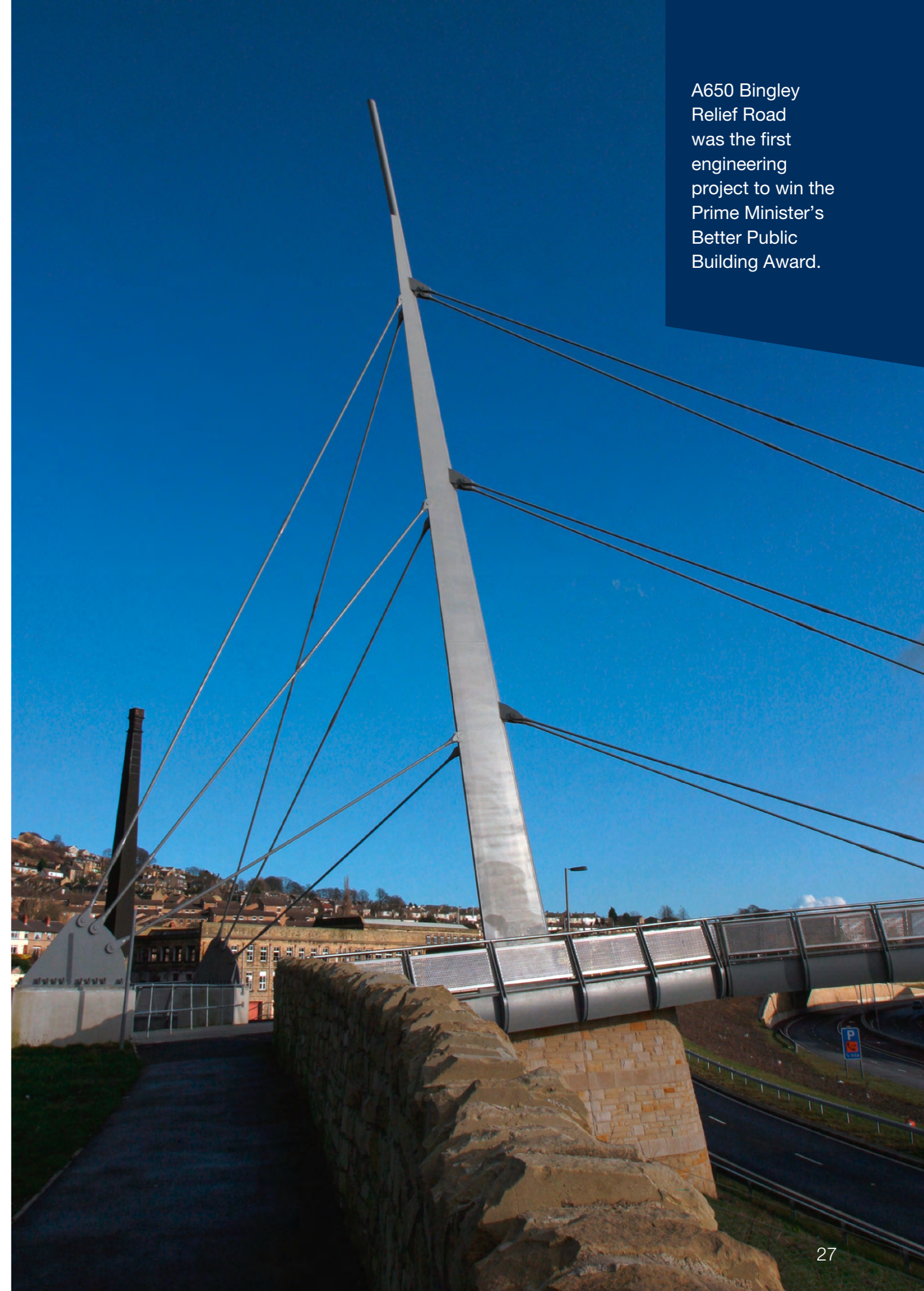
4. Improve working of the Panel

Improve the working of the Panel and outcomes by replacing the existing Strategic Design Panel with a new design panel comprised of design and other relevant experts, and representatives from relevant National Highways directorates. Continue to engage existing stakeholders on good design via a new 'design forum'.

This will ensure the requirements of the National Highways Licence continue to be met with the support from the leadership of relevant National Highways directorates to follow up actions and recommendations from a new design panel.

The work of the Strategic Design Panel should continue until a new design panel is agreed and established, with new expert members appointed on a fixed term basis and compensated for their time as appropriate.

A650 Bingley Relief Road was the first engineering project to win the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award.



Design champions

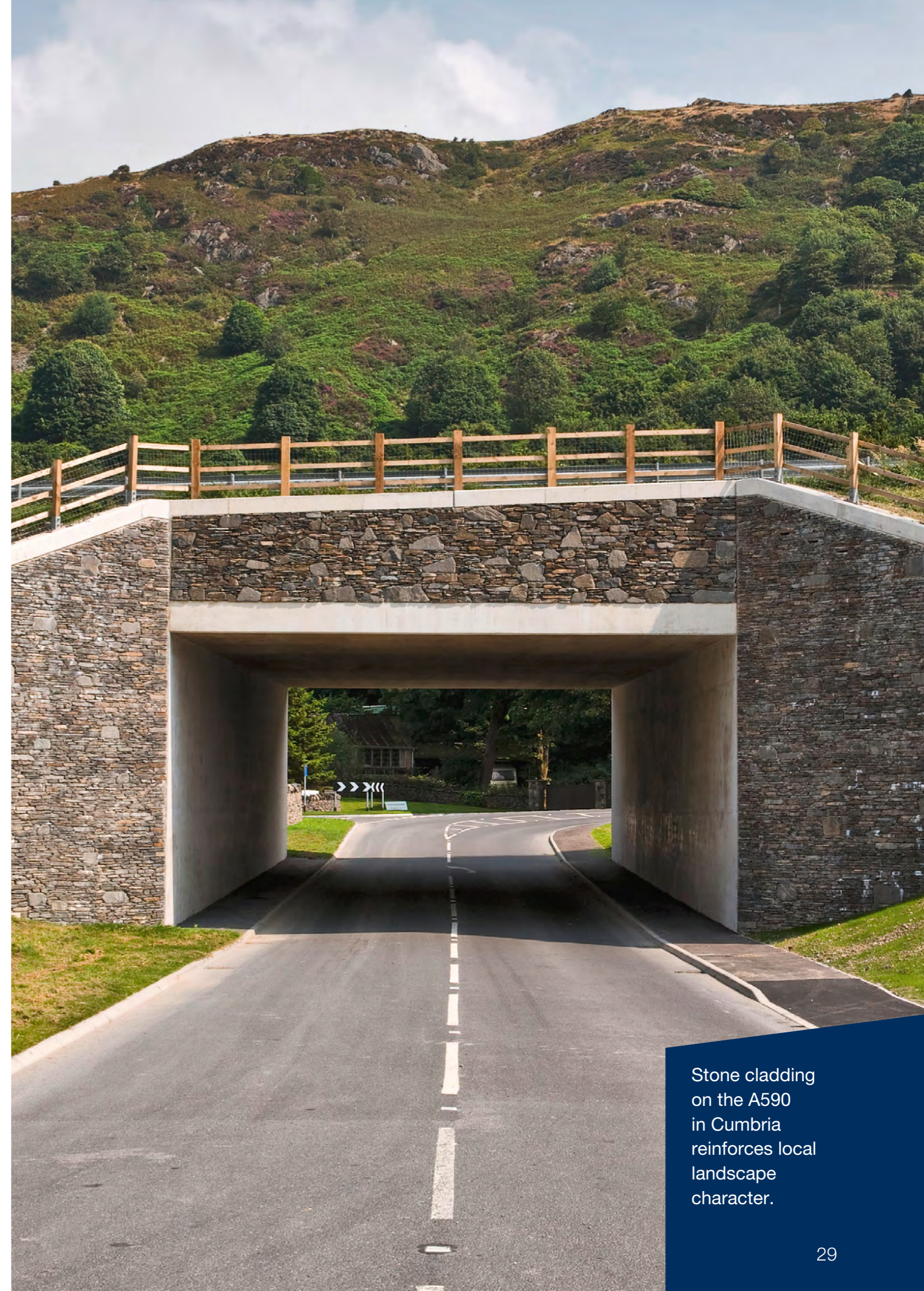
Design champions are senior advocates who can help raise the profile of good design within schemes and programmes. They can help generate enthusiasm for and a commitment to design quality. They can also challenge priorities where these focus exclusively on programme and budget to the detriment of design quality and wider environmental and social benefits.

Currently Mike Wilson, Chief Highways Engineer, acts as National Highways' overall design champion as chair of the Panel. However, it would be beneficial to appoint further design champions in other National Highways directorates to help embed National Highways' vision and principles of good design to ensure they become 'business as usual' in road period 2.

The role of a National Highways design champion might include:

- articulating National Highways' design quality aspirations as set out in *The road to good design*
- ensuring a design vision and design objectives are clearly described early on the design process and defended later
- ensuring context and design quality is considered throughout the design process
- promoting good design's social, economic and environmental benefits
- ensuring advice from design review, where provided, is given due regard
- encouraging schemes to be put forward for design awards

Design champions do not need to have technical design expertise as their role is one of advocacy, not review. However, they do need to be given authority, time and support to enable them to perform this role, but this can be a 'parallel activity' to remind others of National Highways' commitment to good design and the recommendations of this Panel.



Stone cladding on the A590 in Cumbria reinforces local landscape character.

Key recommendations and forward planning

The Panel has made the following key recommendations in this report:

- **National Highways should ensure the Panel becomes more effective following the review of its structure and membership.** Proposals from the review of the Panel should be implemented to ensure National Highways' design vision and principles become 'business as usual' in road period 2.
- **National Highways should expand independent design review to ensure most schemes are considered.** The benefit of independent design review was demonstrated in the report published this year. More schemes should be reviewed earlier and followed up throughout the design process to ensure the principles of good design are fully embedded.
- **National Highways should appoint 'design champions' to support change and improvement.** A design champion should raise the profile of good design and help establish a commitment to design quality. They should challenge priorities where these focus exclusively on programme and budget to the detriment of design quality and wider environmental and social benefits.

Other recommendations related to specific topics considered this year are presented in Appendix A.

Over the next year, membership of the Panel will change following the review. However, a new design panel will continue to support National Highways to promote and embed the principles of good design in practice so that they become 'business as usual'. This new design panel will understand and make recommendations on highway clutter and support good design competitions that challenge current approaches and inspire innovation. The new design panel will consider this work alongside issues emerging from the continued review of schemes by the DRP and monitor progress on previous recommendations.

Appendix A – Understanding best practice

The Panel recognises best practice is ever developing and evolving. The Panel has an important role in understanding current practices and drawing in this best practice to advise how it can be applied to the work of National Highways.

Over the past year, the Panel received presentations and made observations and recommendations on the following:

Sustainable Development and Design Strategy (National Highways/ Ramboll) February 2021

The need for a sustainable development and design strategy to meet the requirements of the National Highways Licence was presented. The objectives of the workshop were to discuss the key drivers influencing National Highways' approach to sustainable development and good design, and also the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to realising sustainable development and good design.

The Panel welcomed the development of a sustainable development and design strategy which could demonstrate leadership in this area. Numerous key drivers were identified to help develop the strategy, including climate change and social value. Strengths included the existing linear estate, weaknesses a lack of capability to change, opportunities for partnership working and the threat of speed of change.

Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (National Highways) May 2021

Recent developments in connected and autonomous vehicles (CAV) and freight platooning were presented. Levels of automation were explained along with issues of road marking quality, roadworks and slip road design. National Highways' future role with such technology presents challenges and choices – does it become maintenance focussed or direct vehicles on the network (by providing a platooning service for example)?

The Panel welcomed the discussion and the potential opportunity to remove some roadside infrastructure with a move to in-vehicle information in future and the need for a phased implementation plan. The Panel questioned whether CAVs may allow for tighter road geometry and at what point changes may happen to road design in response to opportunities. How this technology could enhance the user experience was also raised.

Learning from built scheme evaluations (National Highways) October 2021

Learning from the six built scheme evaluations undertaken to date was presented. Although these schemes were completed before the publication of The road to good design, the evaluations establish a baseline and raise issues to be considered in design review, research and guidance.

The Panel welcomed plans for training, but recommended the need for on-going dialogue with design teams as quality may erode over time as change is constant. As well as 'bottom up' training, higher level design champions recommended to ensure 'top down' priority for good design. A comprehensive approach is required and although an understanding of design principles important, the need to focus on simple ideas for detailed design and implementation should also be considered.

A27 Arundel Bypass (National Highways / Linkconnex) October 2021

A landscape strategy and principles, plus key challenges and opportunities for the scheme, were presented. These included a viaduct over the floodplain, detrunking of the existing route and connecting to the wider walking and cycling network, potentially reducing speed at the western end to minimise ecological impact and overall biodiversity net gain.

The Panel welcomed the approach of challenging previous assumptions to achieve a balance and exploring shared opportunities to benefit the community. A design narrative could help articulate this approach and benefits of the scheme, noting mitigation is not a benefit. A follow up design review was recommended.

Net zero highways (National Highways) October 2021

National Highways' net zero plan was presented. The plan focusses on net zero operations by 2030, net zero construction and maintenance by 2040 and net zero from users by 2050, with a focus on decarbonisation rather than reducing use/capacity. The plan is challenging as some solutions/approaches/technology is still to be developed, such as for construction and heavy goods vehicles.

The Panel welcomed the plan and discussions focussed on whether current schemes are incorporating measures to support future net zero ambitions. The Panel suggested care needs to be taken to ensure technology does not override good design. Further thinking needed on what net zero will look like. Need to be clear on what is trying to be achieved to avoid a narrow focus on carbon only. Consider balancing decisions with wider environmental challenges across the network, including adaptation and biodiversity.

Future of service areas (National Highways) May 2022

The government's rapid charging fund was presented. This is a new £950 million programme to future-proof electrical capacity at motorway and major A road service areas to prepare the network for zero emission vehicles. The fund is integral to decarbonising the network and supports National Highways' net zero plan. Alongside the potential introduction of connected and autonomous vehicles, the fund represents a potential catalyst for change and improvement to service areas.

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to discuss the future of service areas and the contribution the fund will make to supporting the uptake of zero emission vehicles and also potential wider improvements to service areas. The Panel suggested the design of service areas needs to be reconsidered with a focus on user experience. The whole site should be considered with a potential increase in time spent, alongside the future of existing petrol stations. The Panel recommended a review of service areas is undertaken and design guidance developed alongside the introduction of the rapid charging fund.

Highway Clutter (Atkins) May 2022

As recommended by the Panel previously, a study of highway clutter is being undertaken and background and initial thoughts were presented. The focus of the study will be understanding the reasons for, and actions to address, various forms of highway clutter. Signage, fencing, barriers, roadside equipment all contribute to highway clutter which is not only visually intrusive, but is wasteful of resources and maintenance, and potentially distracting to drivers.

The Panel welcomed the study and agreed the problem of clutter is not new and often arises in operation as elements are added over time. It was discussed that clutter is not designed as such and the lack of an overall design approach carried through into operation is a fundamental problem. The Panel recommended that the study include roadside advertising and consider recent local highway successes in reducing sign clutter following DfT guidance.

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