

Our ref:
Your ref:

The Times
Letters Desk
1 Pennington Street
E981TA

Chief Executive
5th Floor
123 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9HA

Direct Line: 0207 153 4700

25 June 2009

Sir

Your article 'Rising costs put the brakes on roadbuilding projects' (Times, page 20, 25 June 2009) is wrong to state that 'dozens of road schemes will have to be delayed or cancelled because of escalating costs'.

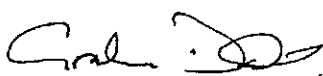
In January the Government announced 24 improvement schemes to motorways and major trunk roads that would start construction by 2015. Up to £6 billion has been made available for this. We continue to prepare and deliver this programme, alongside schemes prioritised by the English regions.

To say costs were deliberately underestimated is also incorrect. Increasing costs between programme entry and completion was examined fully by a National Audit Office report in 2007. This found that inflation in construction costs were much higher than general inflation.

The Agency has made significant improvements to the way it estimates the cost of planned road schemes and there have been no significant changes in costs on schemes open to traffic - or in construction - since the latest costs were published in July 2008.

It is also wrong to suggest that the M25 widening is being delayed because of funding constraints. We recently awarded the contract to widen two sections of the M25 and work started on site in May. The remaining two sections are commencing design this year and programmed to start construction before 2015.

Yours sincerely



Graham Dalton
Chief Executive