

A249 IWADE BYPASS TO QUEENBOROUGH IMPROVEMENT SCHEME (Including - THE NEW SWALE CROSSING)

Newsletter Issue 1

July 2004

Welcome to Issue 1 of the A249 IWADE BYPASS TO QUEENBOROUGH IMPROVEMENT SCHEME newsletter. This issue is the first of a regular series of updates throughout the work and explains what the Improvement Scheme entails and what has been happening since the Ground Breaking Ceremony in April 2004.

The £100 million A249 scheme includes a new road bridge over The Swale and the construction of road links on either side, improving transport links between the Isle of Sheppey and mainland Kent. The Highways Agency, which is an executive agency of the Department for Transport, awarded a 30 year Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) contract to Sheppey Route Limited in February 2004 to design, construct, maintain and operate the new road.

The bridge and road project, which is part of the Government's Targeted Programme of major road improvements, is expected to be completed by Summer 2006. The existing A249 Kingsferry Bridge is a lifting bridge crossing The Swale and causes long delays to traffic when it is raised to allow shipping through. The New Swale Crossing is a vital part of the scheme and will provide major benefits to commuters in North Kent by reducing congestion and improving journey times on the route because it is high enough to allow ships to pass underneath and not disrupt the traffic. The new link to the Isle of Sheppey will improve traffic flow to and from the mainland and assist future development plans and growth in the area.

Sheppey Route Ltd also took over responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the A249 from its junction with the M2 near Stockbury in Kent, to Sheerness Docks on the Isle of Sheppey from 1 June 2004, under the management of the Highways Agency.



Artist's Impression of the New Swale Crossing

Ground Breaking Ceremony

Transport Minister David Jamieson marked the start of the long-awaited excavation works for the second Swale Crossing by breaking the first ground on 29 April 2004 using a mechanical digger. Mr Jamieson broke the ground for the foundations of the first pier of the new bridge. More than 80 invited guests from local councils and Derek Wyatt MP joined Mr Jamieson and representatives from the Highways Agency and Sheppey Route Ltd at The Borough Hall in Queenborough and on-site for the occasion.



Roads Minister, David Jamieson starts excavation for new bridge

What is Happening?

The scheme provides a new high-level crossing over The Swale and will extend the existing dual carriageway northwards towards the town of Queenborough. This new bridge will link the Isle of Sheppey to mainland Kent and will be built to carry four lanes of traffic. As part of the DBFO Project, Sheppey Route Ltd's contractors, Carillion, will design and construct the 5.6km long A249 Iwade Bypass to Queenborough Improvement.

When and Where are the Works Happening?

In late 2004 / early 2005, the new Swale Crossing will take shape as the building of the bridge commences. Completion of the entire project is expected in Summer 2006. Advanced environmental and utility diversions works commenced in February 2004 to prepare the site for the main construction works, which started in June 2004.

Forthcoming issues of the A249 IWADE BYPASS TO QUEENBOROUGH IMPROVEMENT SCHEME newsletter will show the location and description of the various stages of works along the route.

Why are these Works Necessary?

The new high-level bridge over The Swale will provide un-interrupted and improved access for people living and working on the island. At present the only road access to the Isle of Sheppey is via the existing A249 Trunk Road, which is carried by a lifting bridge over the Swale estuary. Shipping traffic on The Swale has right of way over road traffic and each time the Kingsferry Bridge is raised to allow ships to pass, the Isle of Sheppey is cut off from the mainland. This happens around 2000 times a year causing considerable delays to A249 traffic.

Scheme Plan

[Click here to view a plan of the Scheme](#)

Where will the New Road be?

The main route from mainland Kent onto the Isle of Sheppey will run from the Kingsferry Interchange across the new bridge to join the line of the existing A249 as far as the junction with Ferry Road, before moving away to a new roundabout at Cowstead Corner.

The new A249 dual carriageway will then continue to the south of Queenborough Road, via a roundabout to Neatscourt to cater for proposed development, to a new signal controlled junction with Main Road at Queenborough. From here the new dual carriageway will narrow to a single carriageway to join Brielle Way.

A section of new local road will be constructed alongside the new Trunk Road to maintain a link between Kingsferry Bridge, which will be retained, and Cowstead Corner for local traffic. This link road will provide for pedestrians and cyclists for safety reasons, as they will not be permitted to use the new high-level bridge.

How Does this Scheme Affect Me?

For the duration of the works, a range of traffic management systems will be used to reduce the impact of road works on the area and to divert traffic away from the site of works to ensure the safety of the road user and those who are carrying out works on the road.

Traffic management will include diversions, contra-flows, temporary traffic lights and reduced speed limits. All traffic management arrangements will be planned and reviewed by the Highways Agency, together with Sheppey Route and its contractor, along with the local council and police to ensure that the impact on road users is minimised. Changes to the existing road layout will be clearly signed to assist the road user in their journey. However, it is recommended that road users allow extra time for journeys through the site of the works, or vary journeys if possible.



Caring for the local Environment

Protecting the Environment

A key issue that has influenced the design of the scheme is the need to protect the local environment. The route of the new road crosses areas of international significance for birds and includes areas classified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. A number of design features have been incorporated into the scheme to mitigate the impact on the environment. An example is that the width of the embankments leading to the new bridge has been kept to a minimum to reduce the amount of land taken, and drainage has been carefully designed to ensure that there is minimal impact on the ecology of the marshes. Replacement sites for flora and fauna have been established at Chetney Marshes on the mainland.

Advanced environmental surveys were carried out to identify any wildlife likely to be affected by the construction of the scheme. As a result, during the autumn of 2003, water voles were carefully removed to temporary accommodation in agreement with the Environment Agency and English Nature. Using approved methods, 48 animals were removed and will be released back to the site when the works are complete.

In the meantime, fresh ditches have been dug and planted with appropriate food and cover species in areas that are not affected by the works, to create a suitable new habitat. The new ditches are being protected by exclusion fencing until the new habitat is sufficiently established to support the animals. Following their release, the animals will be monitored to ensure the viability of the population.



Water Vole

How Can I Find Out More Information?

As the scheme develops, you will be kept informed by newsletter. The Highways Agency Information Line (HAIL) and Website will also provide up to date information during the works.

Contact Details

HAIL – **08457 50 40 30**

Scheme Website – **www.highways.gov.uk/swalecrossing**

If you would like to request additional copies of this newsletter, or to receive future issues by post, then please send a request to - "Newsletter Mailing List" at: -

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Driving through roadworks



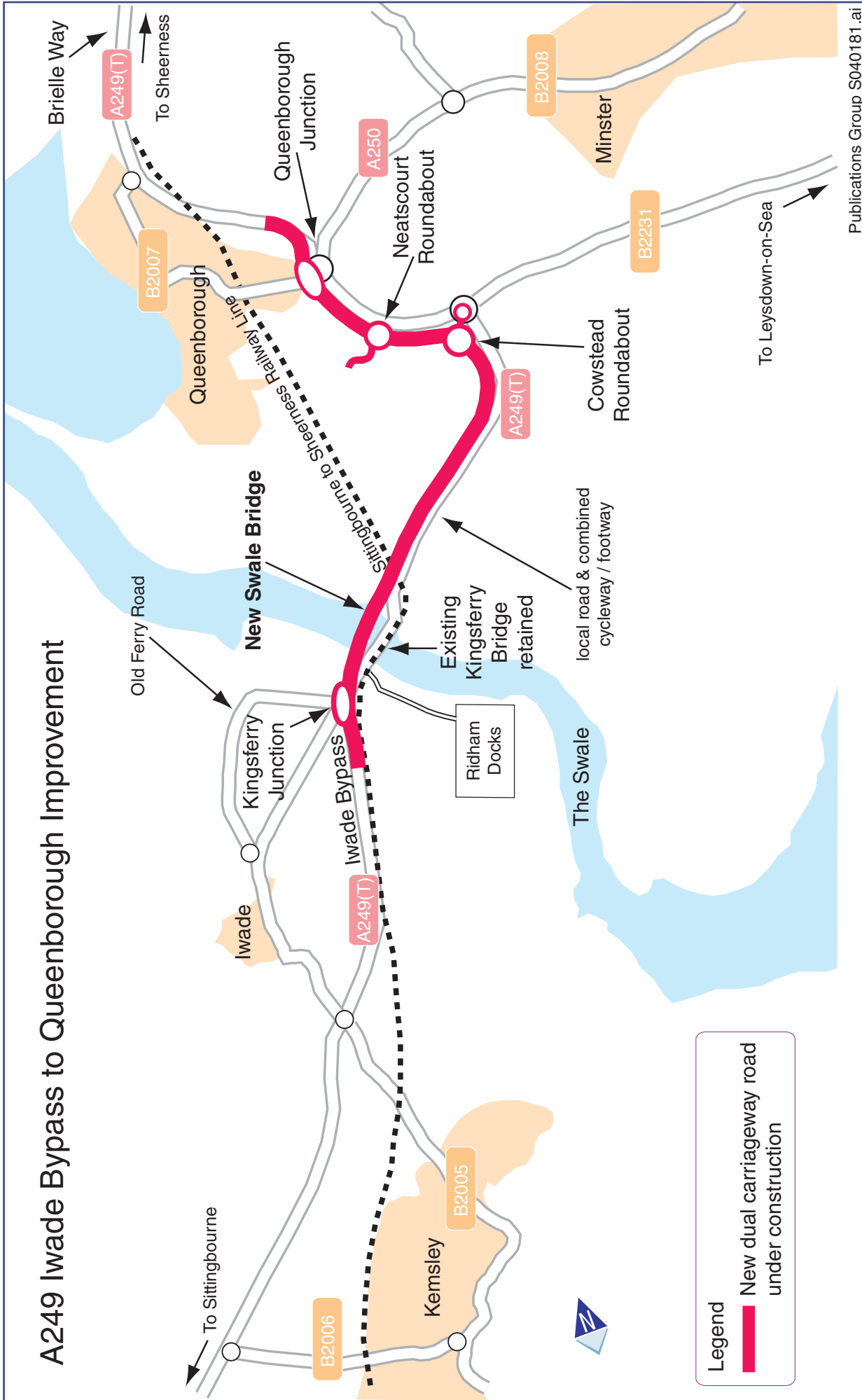
If you do have to drive through roadworks, please take extra care.

- Keep to the speed limit - it is there for your safety
- Get into the correct lane in good time - don't keep switching
- Concentrate on the road ahead, not on the roadworks
- Be alert for works traffic leaving or entering roadworks
- Keep a safe distance - there could be queues in front
- Observe all signs - they are there to help you

Remember that tiredness can kill. Take regular breaks from driving.

For further information on the Highways Agency call our information line: 08457 50 40 30

A249 Iwade Bypass to Queenborough Improvement



Legend
█ New dual carriageway road under construction

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