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'LOCAL' VERSUS 'REGIONAL' ROAD FUNDING

Further to my letter of 28 August 2007 regarding 'local' and 'regional' road funding, the Commons public accounts committee has today published its report into estimating and monitoring the cost of building roads in England. For your convenience I enclose a copy of this report.

The report concludes that regional prioritisation of road schemes can mean that neither small low cost local schemes nor schemes of national importance are given appropriate priority.

A prime example of such smaller schemes is the A140 Long Stratton by-pass, to alleviate congestion on the main artery linking Norwich and Ipswich (the A140 is mentioned in paragraph 7 on page nine of the report; see also my exchange with Sir David Rowlands on page Ev16 from Q134 onwards).

Under present funding arrangements, schemes such as the A140 Long Stratton by-pass are unlikely *ever* to be funded, which cannot have been the government's intention. The public accounts committee suggests an answer to this problem, by making specific funds available for smaller schemes to meet local priorities which would otherwise be delayed indefinitely in favour of regional schemes.

Sir David informed the committee that your Department is now examining how the RFA mechanism can be developed further to address this issue. I would be most grateful if you could let me know what progress has been made in these discussions and when you expect to adjust the funding allocation mechanisms to assist smaller locally important schemes.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes

RICHARD BACON MP