

£130 million upgrade set to unlock huge benefits for thriving North East

The new A19 Testo's flyover over an iconic South Tyneside roundabout will enable better journeys and connections to international gateways and the rest of the country. Drivers can now travel along the A19 over the roundabout and benefit from new slip roads to the A184.

The upgrade comes as part of the Government's drive to build back better from the pandemic and level up regions across the country.

Highways England marked the milestone, with an event where key partners, including Costain, Jacobs, South Tyneside Council, North East England Chamber of Commerce and Tyne Tunnels were in attendance.

Among those celebrating the official opening of the A19 Testo's junction improvements were (from left to right): Fiona Bootle (Tyne Tunnels Manager), Trevor Male (South Tyneside Council, Strategic Transport Lead), Tim Gamon (Regional Delivery Director for Yorkshire and North East, Highways England) and John Marshall (Chair of North East England Chamber of Commerce)

Minister for Roads, Buses and Places, Baroness Vere of Norbiton said:

The £130m Testo's junction upgrade will be hugely beneficial to the North East, providing swifter, more reliable free-flowing journeys and supporting economic growth in the region.

As we build back better from the pandemic, this Government will continue to invest billions of pounds to improve infrastructure, boost connections, and level-up regions right across the country.

Highways England Acting Chief Executive Nick Harris said:

This opening is an important milestone in the substantial investment being made in the North East's major A roads.

These improvements will make a major contribution to the region, from providing better journeys to and from the region's ports and Teesside airport, to improving journey times for local people who can get home more quickly and safely to their families or to and from their workplace.

Our roads are not only the lifeblood of our economy, they support local as well as national businesses, and are vital to enable our emergency services to support local communities.

The upgrade at Testo's, one of more than 35 ongoing major improvement projects across England's motorways and major A roads, is integral in a huge investment package into the A19; where:

- extra capacity is being created on the Downhill Lane junction between the A19 and the A1290 in Sunderland, supporting plans for the development of the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP), located in the area north of Sunderland's Nissan Motor Manufacturing plant and major international supply chain companies, adjacent to the A19.
- widening and noise reduction enhancements are being made to the road between the Norton to Wynyard junctions. The major project is due to complete by this autumn, several months earlier than planned; and
- since 2019, drivers can now continue along the A19 north or south without being held up at the Silverlink Roundabout (A19/A1084 Coast Road) with the creation of a new carriageway under the existing junction.

Also in the region, Highways England is carrying out a range of improvements along the A1 corridor between Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead by increasing the number of lanes in each direction between junction 74 at Scotswood and junction 79 at North Brunton. Work is also beginning this summer into widening the carriageway between junction 65 at Birtley and junction 67 at Coal House.

Peter Molyneux, Major Roads Director at Transport for the North, said:

It's fantastic to see this improved junction open to traffic and hear that it is already making a real difference to those using the A19 by removing a renowned pinch-point.

The upgraded junction will provide extra capacity to help increase resilience, and also bring safety improvements and a better integrated local road network. It will also boost the development of the International Advance Manufacturing Park, supporting jobs and investment in the area.

Improving vital strategic roads like the A19 is essential to support the local and regional economy, giving people and businesses the reliable roads they need. As Transport for the North we will continue to speak with one voice for our region and advocate for investment in key schemes such as this as part of our multimodal Strategic Transport Plan and Investment Programme.

Work began on the installation of the Testo's flyover back in March 2019, in an effort to tackle the heavy traffic which beset the junction, and is predicted to cater as many as 83,400 vehicles every day by 2033.

New link roads are being built between Downhill Lane and Testo's, aimed at boosting journey times, as well as providing new facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

Prior to the 142-metre and 1,300-plus tonne flyover opening to traffic, a Highways England traffic officer vehicle was joined by vehicles from Northumbria Police, Tyne and Wear Fire Service, North East Ambulance Service Nissan, as the first to travel officially over the new road.

Nissan, who's new electric Leaf model is being built at the nearby Sunderland plant, has recently announced a major expansion of battery production in the region creating thousands of new jobs both directly and in the supply chain.

Alan Johnson, Vice President of Manufacturing at Nissan UK said:

The region's excellent transport links were one of the main reasons Nissan took the decision, more than 40 years ago, to locate our plant in Sunderland. Since then thousands of our staff, as well as millions of our cars, have travelled around the Testo's roundabout.

The new flyover will provide a tremendous upgrade and we're delighted that the 100% electric Nissan Leaf was the first car to officially drive over the new bridge.

More than 1,350³ (tonnes cubed) have been saved on the overall scheme footprint by recycling material from the A1058 Coast Road and more than 27,000 new plants have been added to the area.

Watch a [video of the junction's transformation](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.