

Statement to Parliament: Oxford to Cambridge Expressway: road scheme update

England's road network is a huge national asset and a cornerstone of our present and future economic prosperity. Across the country the government is investing in this network, in order to open up new opportunities, improve productivity and connect people and businesses.

As part of this, after considerable consultation and review, the government is announcing today (12 September 2018) the preferred corridor for the new Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, accepting the recommendations of Highways England.

The expressway, which fills a major gap in the national road network, will work together with the proposed East West Rail link to revolutionise east-west connectivity. In so doing, it will help unlock the commercial development of up to one million new homes.

The expressway is projected to take up to 40 minutes off the journey between the A34 south of Oxford and the M1, so that hundreds of thousands of people will be brought within reach of high quality jobs in centres of rapid growth such as Oxford Science Park. The preferred corridor identified today runs alongside the planned route of East West Rail, so that consumers have a variety of road and rail travel options.

This decision determines the broad area within which the road will be developed: the process of designing a specific route will now get under way, involving extensive further consultation with local people to find the best available options. Members of the public will be able to comment on the full set of front-running designs in a public consultation next year, and the road is on schedule to be open to traffic by 2030.

The choice of this corridor means that the government has ruled out construction in the area of the Otmoor nature reserve, underlining its desire to protect the natural environment.

The government also recognises that no one corridor can support every proposed development across the area. It is therefore commissioning England's economic heartland to carry out a study of how to provide better connectivity across the wider area, so that places outside of the preferred corridor enjoy the benefits of growth as far as possible.

Between 2015 and 2021 the government is investing £15 billion to improve the UK's busiest roads. Already, it has opened the first all-motorway link from Newcastle to London; and after 45 years without change the Department for Transport is working with [Transport for the North](#) to develop 3 upgrades to capacity across the Pennines.

The government is also spending billions to transform connectivity in the south west with the dualling of the A303 and A30, and to create better access to and from our ports and airports through projects such as the Lower Thames Crossing and upgrade of the A14 link between the Midlands and Felixstowe.

The common theme linking all these projects is the need to create and upgrade the UK's infrastructure. So too it is here with the new Oxford-Cambridge expressway.

[News story: Safety incident at Bagillt user worked crossing](#)

At around 11:56 hrs on Friday 17 August, a passenger train passed over a user worked level crossing, near Bagillt, North Wales, shortly after a user with a heavy good vehicle had completed using the crossing. The train, the 09:53 Manchester Piccadilly to Holyhead service, was travelling at around 75 mph (121 km/h). The private level crossing, which gives access to industrial premises, is only used by vehicles which are too tall to pass under a nearby bridge. The route over the crossing goes over two widely spaced tracks, and the crossing gates are 25 metres apart. The gates are kept locked. The crossing is fitted with telephones for users to contact the signaller and request permission to cross. To use this crossing, vehicle drivers must unlock and open both gates on foot, drive their vehicle over and reclose and lock both gates on foot.

The user requested permission to cross the railway with a 'wagon', and the signaller, based at the Wales Railway Operations Centre in Cardiff, granted it.

There had been similar previous occurrences at this crossing, on 31 October 2017 and 10 December 2014. At those times the level crossing was supervised by signallers based locally at Holywell Junction signal box. Our investigation will determine the sequence of events. It will also include consideration of:

- the actions of those involved
- the rules and guidance for signallers relating to factors which need to be considered when giving permission for the crossing to be used
- the information and guidance provided to users of private level crossings
- the management of safety risk at this crossing
- any relevant underlying management factors

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

You can [subscribe](#) to automated emails notifying you when we publish our reports.

[News story: Consultation announced to improve learning disabilities staff training](#)

The Department of Health and Social Care will seek views on its plans to expand awareness training for health and care staff who work with people with learning disabilities.

The proposed training could cover:

- relevant legislation
- making adjustments to the way care is provided
- how to provide care that helps people reach their full potential

The consultation will ask for views from people who have experience of learning disabilities, NHS and social care providers and the general public.

The government [announced the consultation as part of a series of measures](#) in response to a report from the first national mortality review of learning disability published in May 2018, known as the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) Programme.

The measures recognise a need for better awareness among health and care staff about making reasonable adjustments to the way that care or information is provided to people with learning disabilities.

Other measures announced include:

- sharing the learning from the [named social worker pilot](#), which explored one-to-one support for people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs
- plans for a long-term study of the impact of integrated community support for people with learning disabilities
- testing and developing a quality-of-life standard for people with learning disabilities that can be used to measure the effectiveness of support

Minister for Care, Caroline Dinenage, said:

Every person with a learning disability must receive the same high-quality care you and I would expect. For too long many people with learning disabilities have had their lives tragically cut short, in part because of a lack of understanding about their needs. This must end.

We will consult on expanding learning disability awareness training so that health and care staff are better equipped to provide compassionate and informed care. Support will be improved to help enhance the lives of people with learning disabilities across the country – anything less is unacceptable.

Press release: Significant progress and a setback for flood reduction work in a Lancashire town

A £1million flood alleviation project which will provide vital protection to 91 homes and 17 businesses in Earby is now likely to be delayed.

The project has been set back due to a major obstruction being discovered whilst drilling the new culvert beneath the disused railway embankment just under halfway along the route.

The Environment Agency's contractors, JBA Bentley, are on site working hard to find a solution so that the culvert repair can be completed as quickly as possible. The work started on Monday 23 July and was expected to take 13 weeks.

To reduce the impact on local residents the current temporary traffic lights on the A56 will be removed on Friday (14 September). They will be reinstalled for a shorter period of time when a solution has been agreed.

Next week new temporary traffic lights will be installed for around two weeks at the junction of the A56 and Victoria Road, near the Co-op food store, so that further sections of Victoria Clough culvert can be repaired.

Other elements of the project are progressing well with the completion of 43m of structural re-lining of Victoria Clough culvert from the junction of Valley Road and Victoria Road. The road is expected to be re-instated and re-opened by Friday 21 September.

Paul Swales, flood risk advisor for the Environment Agency, said:

We would like to thank residents and businesses for their patience

and understanding while we carry out this essential work to reduce flood risk and protect their properties.

Whilst the work is carried out there will be some disruption to motorists using the A56 and Victoria Road. There will also be some parking restrictions on Victoria Road.

The flood alleviation project involves making Victoria culvert structurally sound. Culverts are structures which carry water underground. They were often built to allow development to take place around them such as roads, homes and businesses. Many people live and work near culverts and may not even know they are there.

A new culvert will be installed beneath the disused railway embankment to replace the existing one which has collapsed. The team will also re-line or replace a number of sections along the length of the culvert at locations under Victoria Road and the A56 Skipton Road.

A new and improved trash screen will also be fixed at the inlet of the culvert, to help reduce the risk of it becoming blocked with debris and making it easier and safer to clear when water levels are high.

The Environment Agency continues to explore other options to reduce flood risk from all sources in and around Earby. Over the next 12 months, the team will investigate the options in more detail, which include flood storage areas on Earby Beck, the New Cut and Victoria Clough and installing a flood defence wall at Boot Street.

The Environment Agency is looking for volunteer flood wardens to play a key part in keeping Earby prepared and informed before, during and after a flood. Anyone interested in becoming a flood warden can email heather.cottrill@environment-agency.gov.uk to find out more.

By signing up to the Environment Agency's free Flood Warning service residents and businesses can receive flood alerts and flood warnings for Earby Beck and/or Earby New Cut directly to their phone and emails, 24/7. To find out if you're at risk and register for Flood Warnings please visit: www.gov.uk/flood

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