

News story: Congestion busting scheme rolled out to benefit drivers

Long traffic jams caused by roadworks could be a thing of the past as a scheme which has already significantly reduced delays in Kent and London is rolled out nationwide.

Lane rental schemes, where utility companies are charged up to £2,500 a day for digging up the busiest roads at peak times, could now be adopted by councils nationwide after successful trials in the south-east.

They incentivise firms to work on quieter roads or outside of rush hour, or even to collaborate with other companies to stop roads being dug up multiple times, to reduce the impact of roadworks on drivers.

Pilot lane rental schemes in London and Kent have seen congestion on the busiest roads drop, saving drivers time and boosting the economy.

Transport Minister Jo Johnson said:

Drivers often see red when roadworks cause them delays, especially if no one is working on them.

Lane rental has seen a massive drop in disruption to drivers as utility companies have changed when and where they carry out work. Now we want millions of motorists around England to get the same benefits.

The Department for Transport carried out a [consultation into the scheme last year](#), and the majority of those responding supported its rollout nationwide. Many said they wanted to take advantage of the 'clear benefits' of lane rental schemes.

RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

This is a very welcome announcement. Trials showed that some of the worst congestion caused by planned utility works in London was reduced by half on roads where lane rental was in operation, so rolling this out will extend the benefits nationwide.

While motorists accept that some roadworks and congestion are unavoidable, lengthy and unnecessary queues are incredibly frustrating. RAC research suggests congestion on our roads and journey time reliability are growing concerns for motorists so introducing lane rental should encourage better planning and coordination of roadworks, and mean utility works are completed in a swifter, more efficient manner.

About 2.5 million roadworks are carried out each year, costing the economy £4 billion in increased costs to businesses through late employees or deliveries.

In London, utility companies have worked together more than 600 times since lane rental was introduced in 2015, up from just 100 beforehand.

The Department for Transport will produce guidance in the autumn to help councils develop lane rental schemes for approval. The first schemes could start by the end of 2019.

Press release: PM calls with the Leaders of Sinn Fein and the DUP: 15 February 2018

The Prime Minister spoke to the leaders of Sinn Fein and the DUP on the phone earlier this evening about the recent phase of political talks in Northern Ireland.

In both phone calls the Prime Minister expressed her disappointment that an agreement had not yet been reached despite recent progress being made by everyone involved.

She reiterated how the government remains absolutely committed to restoring an Executive and that it is still her firm belief that restoring devolved government – so that democratically elected politicians can make locally accountable decisions – is in the best interests of everyone in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister was clear that she still believes the basis for an agreement exists and recognised the leadership both parties had shown over past weeks and months. She urged them both to reflect on the recent phase of talks in order to find the best way forward.

On next steps, the Prime Minister was clear that the UK government has a responsibility to consider what needed to be done to protect the interests of Northern Ireland in the ongoing absence of an Executive. She added that the Northern Ireland Secretary would continue to work closely with the parties, and the Irish Government in accordance with the three stranded approach, to support that process.

Press release: Charity regulator sets out scope of statutory inquiry into Oxfam

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today set out the scope of its statutory inquiry into Oxfam, registered charity number 202918.

The inquiry was opened on 12 February 2018 after the Commission examined documents sent on Monday by Oxfam regarding allegations of misconduct by staff involved in its humanitarian response in Haiti. The Commission has concerns that Oxfam may not have fully and frankly disclosed material details about the allegations at the time in 2011, its handling of the incidents since, and the impact that these have both had on public trust and confidence.

The purpose of the statutory inquiry is to:

1. examine the charity's governance (including leadership and culture), its management and its policies and practices with regard to safeguarding, in the context of the applicable law, good practice and its obligations as a charity, both generally and particularly in relation to:
 - its response, general handling and disclosure to the Commission, statutory funders and other key donors, agencies and stakeholders in relation to serious safeguarding incidents which have taken place since 2011 including its Haiti programme
 - its responsibility to provide a safe environment for its beneficiaries, staff and other charity workers in the delivery of its overseas programmes and generally
 - its recruitment and supervision of its employees, volunteers and other charity workers
 - maintaining its reputation as a major aid charity which can be entrusted with international, governmental and public support and the confidence of its beneficiaries, staff and volunteers
2. scrutinise and review the charity's progress with implementing the requirements in the action plan agreed with the Commission in 2017 and ensure such other actions that may be required to address the findings from the inquiry's work are undertaken

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

Acting in the public interest as regulator, this inquiry must and will establish the facts about what the charity knew about events in Haiti in 2011, and how it responded at the time and since. The inquiry will also help us, and the public, understand Oxfam's overall approach to safeguarding those who come into contact with

the charity – whether they be beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, or the wider communities in which they work. Resolving this is key to upholding public and donor trust and confidence in charity.

This week Oxfam's Chair Caroline Thomson has given us an unequivocal commitment to co-operating fully with the inquiry to ensure our work progresses thoroughly and speedily and to resolving the issues faced by the charity to restore public trust and confidence in Oxfam.

It is expected that the inquiry will review and consider:

- case records to test and verify assurances on the charity's handling of cases
- the charity's handling of the allegations in Haiti; the extent of the charity's knowledge of similar allegations against its staff which predated Haiti (including Chad and Liberia); and the matters or risks arising from its handling and subsequent decision making
- the charity's reporting and communications with law enforcement and other agencies and donors, including DFID and DEC

Anyone with information that could be relevant to the inquiry is advised to contact OxfamInquiry@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk.

The inquiry will assess what additional actions will need to be taken by the charity in order to address the findings from the inquiry's work and to assist in restoring public trust and confidence in Oxfam. The scope of the inquiry will include the charity's trading division and may be amended if other issues emerge during the course of the investigation which raise additional regulatory concerns.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. [Reports of previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity's details can be viewed on the Commission's [online charity search tool](#).

Ends

Notes to editors

1. Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
4. The Commission has been engaged with Oxfam on its safeguarding culture and practices since last year. As a result of the Commission's

engagement, the charity committed to a number of actions in [late 2017](#) to review and improve:

- the charity's governance of safeguarding, including leadership, culture, role modelling and internal reporting;
- the charity's HR culture, policies and practice;
- the charity's organisation structures, management reporting lines and resourcing to support the effective delivery of the charity's safeguarding objectives; and
- the safeguarding management framework where the charity has shared responsibilities in the Oxfam confederation, in particular with Oxfam International

News story: Firing of 50,000th simulated round from turret trainer signals savings of £125M

The trainer, based at Tidworth Garrison in Wiltshire, was first introduced in 2005 to train the commander, gunner and loader of an AS90 – a self-propelled 155mm Howitzer gun.

It is designed to allow gun crews to practice their routine firing drills, turret operating procedures and crew duties without the expense of live firing and offers the immersion and realism of firing, with a reduced safety risk and a highly reduced cost.

Based on a real AS90 turret, the trainer uses an electro-mechanical system to fully replicate a complete firing cycle. This includes the weight and size of the artillery rounds and the noise and turret movement on firing.

Since the trainer was introduced more than 8,500 soldiers have used the equipment. This experience enhances their safety for when they progress to live firing and allows them to focus on more advanced training scenarios.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

This equipment provides high quality training for the British Army that's also cost efficient. As live firing events are extremely expensive and can be logistically challenging, using the AS90 turret trainer is a great alternative. It also offers immersive training that prepares users for live firing both in practice and on the battlefield.

The 50,000th simulated round was fired by Lieutenant General Paul Jaques,

Chief of Materiel (Land) at Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S), the MOD's procurement agency based at MOD Abbey Wood in Bristol.

Lt Gen Paul Jaques said:

This firing marks another milestone demonstrating Defence's innovative and cost-saving approach to deliver effective and worthwhile training for our personnel. I'm exceedingly proud of the team's work and the benefits gained by the soldiers that get to use the training equipment.

The milestone, on February 14, represented savings of approximately £125 million over a 12-year period on the basis that live rounds cost £2,500 per use.

[News story: Regenerative medicine at the front line network event – information pack](#)

At the event in Bristol, a series of presentations provided details of the 2 challenges that make up the Defence and Security Accelerator competition [Regenerative medicine at the front line](#).

Event slides

To set the scene, DASA Innovation Partner Jim Pennycook opened the event by giving an update on the Accelerator and an overview of research funding opportunities for innovative science and technology providers.

Challenge context and overview

Dr Abi Spear, Dstl's Principal Scientist gave an overview of the competition and outlined its strategic importance. Lt Col Graham Lawton also briefed the audience on how front line services would use these emerging technologies and the difference it's hoped it will make.

Technical overview

Dr Abi Spear then gave a technical overview and outlined the competition challenges. Information on the competition process was briefed by Emma Howe,

Accelerator Competition Manager.

How to work with DASA

Mike Madden, Open Call for Innovation Lead outlined how organisations can work with DASA and gave advice on how to submit good proposals for funding.

The competition closes at midday on 11 April 2018.

All queries will be answered by email. Send queries to our competition DSTLRegenDefenceAccelerator@dstl.gov.uk and DASA accelerator@dstl.gov.uk email inbox.