

Press release: Winners of Highways England Supplier Recognition Awards announced

The combined efforts of Highways England contractors who worked tirelessly to repair and rebuild a storm-damaged road in Cumbria have been honoured at the company's annual Supplier Recognition Scheme awards. Pulling out all the stops, this vital route was repaired, making a real difference to an area where tourism plays a vital part to the local economy.

Kier Highways, and Cubby Construction JV with the local supply chain completed the work three weeks early, under budget and without a single incident. It meant the local community had the A591 back in action in time for the start of the tourist season and Highways England could notch up a 'first' by delivering improvements on a local road network.

The Cumbria nomination was among 130 entries in this year's awards which also recognised companies for achievements in various fields including safety, customer service, sustainability, capability, value and inclusion. The supply chain – ranging from small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to international organisations – carries out around 90 per cent of Highways England's work.

Jim O'Sullivan, Chief Executive of Highways England said:

We need and value the expertise, ambition and innovation our supply chain partners bring, because without them we cannot deliver the £15 billion Government investment.

We have achieved a great deal since April 2015, and there is much more to do. We are responsible for the largest road building programme in a generation, and have thousands of miles of road network that need to be maintained to a high standard. It is imperative that we achieve this while keeping our network open to traffic, and ensuring the safety of our customers and workforce.

That is what our awards are all about, recognising the contribution our supply chain partners make to the important work we do.

Safety, health and wellbeing

Awarded to suppliers who show industry leading commitment to improving organisational, workforce and road user health and safety.

Winner: A-One+ and Postpullers UK Ltd for a collaborative approach to the development of an innovative solution to remove embedded safety barrier posts. The system reduces the safety risks faced by the workforce: requires

only one operator, not two or three; reduces the amount of machinery needed to remove the barrier posts and gets the job done more quickly.

Highly commended: HW Martin (Traffic Management) Ltd; Manchester smart motorways (Balfour Beatty, Carillion, Costain & Bam/Morgan Sindall JV); Carnell Support Services Ltd

Customer Experience

Awarded to suppliers who have demonstrated industry leading commitment to customer service.

Winner: Costain for the work they did to get to engage with communities, stakeholders, road users and community teams working alongside the construction team on the A556 Knutsford to Bowden scheme. The work they did demonstrated a clear understanding of our customer service strategy, and enabled them to build upon the basics to improve customer service. To achieve this, they used a wide variety of communication channels from VMS to social media to communicate with customers, alongside using commercial providers such as TomTom and ABTA.

Their whole ethos was to think about things differently. That pro-active, customer focused, lessons learned approach was what elevated this submission into the winning bid.

Highly commended: Carillion Morgan Sindall JV

Communities

Awarded to suppliers that have engaged with community groups from the outset, understood what really matters to them and identified ways in which they can work differently.

Winner: Carillion Morgan Sindall JV for work on the A1 Leeming to Barton widening and motorway upgrade. They showed a dedication for changing the face of construction by revolutionising their commitment to social responsibility across the industry, by: proactively working with media to talk about the work they do; health-checks for HGV drivers; showcasing archaeological findings and targeting donations that will positively impact on local communities.

Delivering sustainable and environmental solutions

Awarded to suppliers who have integrated environmental, social, economic and management aspects of sustainable development into the delivery of Highways England contracts.

Winner: Interserve Construction for empowering communities through social value mapping. The company worked alongside an environmental regeneration charity, Groundwork, to track their key objectives. This method enabled a better understanding of the key factors impacting communities where Interserve Construction were operating and their influence on employment, job

creation and supply chain spend. This method has ultimately helped Interserve Construction to better identify how they can help Highways England meet their sustainability targets. For example; M3 Black Dam Improvement and M11 Stansted schemes.

Highly commended: Graham Construction

Inclusion

Awarded to suppliers that have created opportunities to bring people into the workplace, developed skills and created an environment where differences are valued and utilised.

Winner: Skanska UK Ltd for their work to initiate and encourage daily conversations with their colleagues, partners, clients and the wider sector about becoming more diverse and inclusive; how together there can be a culture in which everyone feels they can be themselves. They have tracked the impact of this work over the last six years, and have seen an increase in diversity and inclusion engagement scores from 66% to 82%.

Highly commended: VINCI Construction UK Ltd – Taylor Woodrow

Building capacity and capability

Awarded to suppliers that have developed their employees' skills and capabilities through delivery of Highways England contracts.

Winner: HW Martin (Traffic Management) Ltd for their work in building an employment and skills infrastructure. They actively managed the supply chain, bringing on board people from local SMEs, having a commitment to accessible entry level employment (for people from all backgrounds) and offering training opportunities for local people and SMEs – this includes apprenticeships and a self-funding skills development academy.

Highly commended: Costain M1 smart motorways

Managing down cost/improving value

Awarded to suppliers who have demonstrated significant achievement by delivering Highways England contracts in smarter, more efficient ways.

Winner: A-One+ and Urbis Schreder Ltd for taking an existing lighting unit, used on 24 overhead gantries in Yorkshire to display information to road users, and adapting it to meet Highways England specifications. The result was an improved LED lighting unit, which is more visible to road users (especially at night). In addition, by making these changes, the whole life costs of the units was lowered, disruption to road users reduced (the control gear for the units is installed in the hard shoulder, meaning future maintenance can be done from there, without the need for lane closures) and road worker safety is improved (reduces the need for working from height).

Highly commended: Carnell Support Services Ltd

Supply chain management

Awarded to suppliers that demonstrate Highways England's strategic agenda, values and principles through supply chains.

Winner and Chairman's Award: Kier Highways and Cubby Construction JV with local supply chain for the "Reconnecting Cumbria" Project. This saw national, regional and local organisations working together to repair Cumbria's local road network following an unprecedented series of devastating, severe weather events in December 2015. Through collaboratively working with its supply chain, other contractors and stakeholders including Highways England, Cumbria County Council, Lake District National Park and United Utilities, the winning companies enabled Highways England to deliver works on Cumbria's local road network – a first for the government company – three weeks early, under budget and without a single incident.

Winner: Kier Highways for their work with BSI and ToweDuffy in Area 3 to unlock a new certification process which saw the largest number of SMEs achieve the national standard for Collaborative Business relationships (BS11000) as part of a single assessment. Not only did it reduce costs and result in efficiency savings for Highways England, but it has helped promote collaborative working, improved how information is shared and better delivery.

Highly commended: Costain, Aggregate Industries and Walters; Chevron Traffic Management and Kier Highways, HTM, Golden Orb Solutions, Consillium

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.

[Press release: New £192 million A556 set to open after weekend work](#)

Cheshire's brand new A556 dual carriageway is set to open for the first time a week today (6 March) following a second round of weekend junction and carriageway closures to complete the project.

The M56 junctions 7 and 8, M6 junction 19 and the existing A556 will all be closed next weekend as work to open the new £192 million Knutsford to Bowdon

dual carriageway nears completion.

Work during the first of the 3 scheduled weekend closures was completed successfully on Monday morning allowing Highways England to confirm next weekend's arrangements – another full 56 hour weekend closure running from 9pm next Friday night (3 March) and 5am on the following Monday morning (6 March).

Highways England project manager Paul Hampson said:

We made some excellent progress at the weekend and we won't need another full weekend closure until next week – as scheduled. Everything is looking promising for the road to open a week on Monday.

Next weekend's closure will allow the old road to be finally sealed off to through traffic and for the motorway junctions to be tied into the new dual carriageway.

Motorway users will be diverted to alternative junctions to leave or join the M6 or M56:

- drivers on the northbound M6 heading for Manchester and Manchester Airport will need to stay on the M6, join the westbound M56 at Lymm Interchange (M6 junction 20) and then join the eastbound M56 at junction 10 (Stretton)
- drivers on the westbound M56 heading away from Manchester and wanting to join the southbound M6 will also need to travel to junction 10 at Stretton – joining the eastbound M56 from there to travel back to Lymm Interchange and access the southbound M6

Local diversions which will be strictly monitored will also be in place with access to the A50, Chapel Lane and Mereside Road. A one way system, travelling southbound, will be in place at Bucklow Hill to allow access for residents and businesses located between the Bucklow Hill and Mere junctions along Chester Road. Vehicles must use Mereside Road and Chapel Lane to access Chester Road. Traffic marshalls will be at Mere and Bucklow Hill junctions to facilitate the local diversion.

Over the weekend, only the northbound exit slip at junction 19 of the M6 will remain partially open – allowing drivers to access the southbound, local authority section, of the A556 towards Northwich.

Drivers are advised to build in some extra time for the diversions and to check traffic conditions before setting out on journeys. Highways England provides live traffic information [via its website](#), local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile apps.

Information is also available from Twitter via @highwaysNWEST as well as services in other regions. Providing they can do so safely, road users can also call the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000 to

keep up to date with road conditions.

The new road and the motorway junctions will be closed for finishing works during the project's third and final full weekend of closures between 9pm on Friday 10 March and 5am on Monday 13 March.

Construction of the new A556 link road, between the M56 and the M6, started in November 2014 and is part of a £15 billion government investment in motorways and major A roads by 2021 which is being delivered by Highways England as part of the Northern Powerhouse initiative.

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[Press release: Patel: women are key to building post-conflict stability](#)

Countries will only be able to fully recover from conflict if they involve women in building security and stability, International Development Secretary Priti Patel said today following a visit to Afghanistan.

Ms Patel welcomed the progress Afghanistan has made on women's rights and girls' education since the Taliban's repressive rule. But ahead of International Women's Day next month, she warned that countries like Afghanistan will only achieve security and prosperity if women have the opportunity to play a full and active role in business, politics, peacebuilding and shaping the future of their country.

During her visit, Ms Patel saw a HALO Trust training site where UK funding is helping staff learn to identify and safely remove mines and other unexploded ordnance, saving lives and reclaiming land that can be used for agriculture and building. She also met female HALO workers who identify and map the location of mines for disposal, as well as educating communities and children on the dangers of unexploded ordnance.

Ms Patel also met First Lady Rula Ghani, a champion of women's rights in Afghanistan. And she spoke to female students, teachers and community advocates who benefit from UK funding that has helped provide education to more than 300,000 girls from rural and impoverished communities, who would

have had no opportunity to learn under Taliban rule.

Priti Patel said:

Afghanistan can only succeed in creating a secure and prosperous future if girls and women are put at the heart of its political and economic development.

Women and girls are key to delivering real and lasting peace and stability in countries like Afghanistan – and that is clearly in the UK's interests as well.

Together, the UK and Afghanistan have made huge progress so far. The inspirational girls and women I met during my visit will be instrumental in charting Afghanistan's path to prosperity.

Whilst in Afghanistan, the International Development Secretary also met President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah. She reaffirmed the UK's enduring commitment to working with the Afghan Government and civil society to improve rights for women and girls, and underlined that this was a critical part of the UK's pledge of up to £750 million, made at the Brussels Development Conference last year.

She also spent two days in Pakistan prior to visiting Afghanistan. Whilst there, she met Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, the Chief Minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif and Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of Planning and Development.

She visited a UK-funded health centre that provides primary healthcare services including delivering babies, treating child malnutrition, immunisations and family planning services. She also visited a tuberculosis and leprosy hospital to see how UK support is helping to provide state of the art facilities to diagnose and treat patients.

Notes to editors

1. Today, more than seven million children in Afghanistan are attending school and 39% of them are girls; there has been significant progress in maternal healthcare; and women now hold 28% of parliamentary seats.
2. Legislatively, women's rights have been enshrined in the 2004 Constitution, recognising gender equality and women's right to education and to work.
3. Significant challenges remain, however. Afghanistan still ranks among the lowest in the world for gender equality. Female literacy rates are extremely low at 17%, only 19% of women are in work, and an estimated 87% of women experience violence, abuse and sexual harassment in private and public life.
4. UK funding has helped 2.5 million girls get an education, including the 300,000 under the Girls Education Challenge programme that supported the teachers and students that the International Development Secretary met during his visit.
5. The UK is also providing services and access to justice for women

- victims of violence and helping thousands of women access quality jobs and gain business skills. It is also helping to train security and police forces to provide better support on gender and violence issues.
6. International Women's Day takes place on 8th March and is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The theme of International Women's Day 2017 is 'Be Bold for Change'.

[News story: Installed: the machine set to clean up Sellafield's most hazardous building](#)

The £100 million Silo Emptying Plant will scoop radioactive waste out of the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo.

The 1960s storage facility has been described as one of the most hazardous buildings in western Europe and contains 10,000 cubic metres of intermediate level waste from the earliest days of the UK's civil nuclear industry.

John Clarke, outgoing NDA Chief Executive, unveiled the machine – the first of three being assembled in the building – at a ceremony yesterday.

He said:

This is an enormous step forward for the Sellafield decommissioning programme.

It is the culmination of 20 years of work to get to the position where we've got the first machine in place that will retrieve waste from these silos.

The machines will sit on rails on top of the silo's 22 vertical waste compartments. Each compartment is big enough to accommodate six double decker buses stacked three high.

Once operational, the emptying machines will be manoeuvred into place over the top of each compartment to scoop out their contents.

The material will then be packed into nuclear skips and sent to modern waste stores at Sellafield, pending final disposal in the UK's Geological Disposal Facility.

The machines will be ready to start retrieving waste in 2018, taking an estimated 20-25 years to complete the task.

Chris Halliwell, head of the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo, said:

This is probably the most complicated and advanced machine ever built at Sellafield.

It has about 13,500 different working parts and its design and concept was first drawn up more than 20 years ago.

Turning that vision into the machine we have today has been a major challenge for the UK's advanced manufacturing and nuclear supply chain.

The process has been hugely challenging because no plans were drawn up for how waste would be taken out of the building when it was built in the 1960s.

The emptying machines were built by engineering firm NES Ansaldo at its Wolverhampton factory, before being dismantled and sent to Sellafield in 23 separate modules.

These modules were lifted one by one into the silo building and then re-assembled in situ.

Chris Halliwell added:

There is no job at Sellafield more important than the one being done by this machine. Emptying the waste from this legacy silo is our number one priority.

It has to be reliable because once it starts taking waste out, the contamination inside it would make it very difficult to maintain or repair.

The silo took waste from nuclear power stations all over the UK until its closure in June 2000.

Its contents are chiefly made up of magnesium cladding which was stripped from nuclear fuel rods before they were sent for reprocessing.

[News story: Installed: the machine set to clean up Sellafield's most](#)

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