

Highways England first year progress report on smart motorways stocktake

The House will know that this government takes the safety of our roads very seriously and has invested heavily in improvements to help prevent deaths and injuries. Great Britain has some of the safest roads in the world and, although per hundred million miles driven there are fewer deaths on smart motorways than conventional ones, we are determined to do all we can to help drivers feel safer and be safer on our roads – all our roads.

In March 2020, I published a [Smart motorway safety evidence stocktake and action plan](#). The safety improvements in the 2020 action plan consisted of a package of 18 actions, costing £500 million, including the rollout of radar-based stopped vehicle detection (SVD) technology across the All Lane Running (ALR) motorway network and an additional £5 million on national and targeted communications campaigns to ensure drivers receive advice to help them keep safe.

Furthermore, we have changed the law to enable automatic detection of vehicles driving in closed lanes, known as red X violations. Highways England is upgrading all enforcement cameras across the smart motorway network to enable automatic detection of red X violations which can then be enforced by the police.

One year on from the publications of the 2020 action plan, I commissioned a report from Highways England which sets out its progress on these 18 actions along with proposals about how those actions could be accelerated.

Today (20 April 2021), Highways England has published its Smart motorways stocktake first year progress report 2021. The report contains the latest safety data which updates analysis contained in the 2020 Stocktake report.

The report demonstrates significant progress against the 18 actions, which when delivered in full, will raise the bar on motorway safety.

Over the past 12 months, Highways England has:

- launched a major road safety campaign to give drivers clear advice about what to do in the event of breaking down
- completed work to turn emergency areas orange so they are more visible to drivers and improved the signage letting drivers know how far they are from the next place to stop in an emergency
- installed 10 more emergency areas on the M25 around London
- held a public [consultation on proposed changes to the Highway Code](#) that will provide more information about motorway driving
- continued to upgrade cameras so they can automatically detect red X violations
- introduced radar-based stopped vehicle detection technology on stretches of the M3 and the M20, with work underway on the M1

Highways England is now accelerating a number of actions so that the completion dates set out in [Highways England: Strategic Business Plan 2020-25](#) are brought forward.

Most significantly, radar-based stopped vehicle detection technology will now be installed on all operational ALR motorways by September 2022, 6 months earlier than planned.

Highways England has also made a commitment that no ALR motorways will open without radar technology to spot stopped vehicles, enable lanes to be closed where necessary and get help to drivers quickly.

The data contained in the Highways England progress report continues to show that fatal casualties are less likely on all lane running motorways than on conventional ones, but we know drivers can feel less safe on roads without hard shoulders, which is why the progress report, published today, intends to accelerate a number of actions to provide reassurance to drivers.

[My statement of 24 March 2021](#) confirmed that the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) is carrying out an independent review of the data to provide further analytical assurance and ensure that the conclusions arrived at are robust.

I would like to pay tribute to all those safety campaigners, in particular those who have lost loved ones, on their efforts to ensure that changes are made. The government and Highways England will continue to work hard to improve road safety.

- Measures to boost safety on All Lane Running motorways accelerated press notice, 20 April 2021
- Quality assurance for All Lane Running motorways, letter from the Secretary of State for Transport to Office of Rail and Road