

Highways England on right lines to make 'ghost' markings vanish

'Ghost' road markings and blacked out lines, which can confuse drivers, could become a thing of the past thanks to Highways England's global search for a solution to the problem.

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When white road markings need to be removed, for example when road layouts change, the original lines can sometimes still appear as faint or 'ghost' marks.

The problem is worse in bright sunshine.

But Highways England's £685,000 international research project is aiming to find a solution.



'Ghost markings' which can confuse drivers could become a thing of the past.

The company, responsible for motorways and major A-roads, launched a competition which has seen products from around the world undergo tough testing in the Spanish capital Madrid – with the road markings subjected to some two million 'wheel overs'.

Now the eight winners of the competition are seeing their materials put to the test on the M5 in the south west. In addition, removing markings can cause damage to the surface with the repairs adding to the overall cost of road schemes and creating additional work. Testing is also taking place on five removal systems which could address this issue.

Corporate Group Leader Martin Bolt, who has been overseeing the competition for Highways England, said:

We know 'ghost' markings on any roads, not just ours, can be confusing for drivers and autonomous vehicles so we set out to find a solution which makes a real difference not just for road users on our network but across the globe.

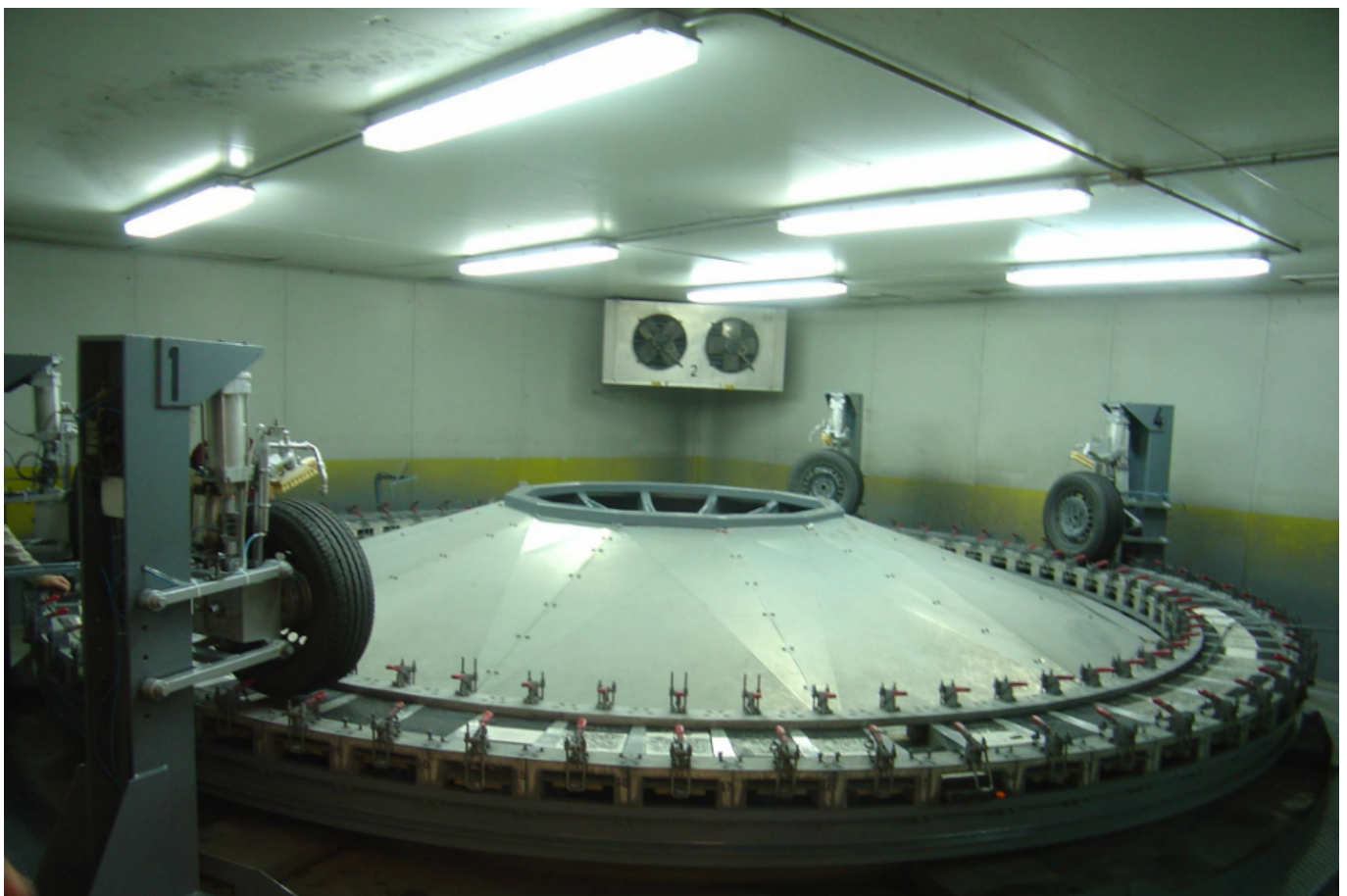
There is a worldwide problem with road marking removal and it is the first time the industry has been challenged like this.

We're hoping the outcome of the competition will give us a greater understanding of the materials and processes we, and the road industry, should be using in future schemes, and will help drivers on their journeys.

The competition, launched in conjunction with Roadcare and Kier, was made possible through a £150 million ringfenced fund Highways England has for innovation projects.

The aim was to find the most effective road markings that will also reduce damage to the surface when the lines are removed.

Thirty-six entries came in from around the globe with applicants asked to send samples of their product for testing which has been taking place at an industry-recognised centre in Madrid.



Road markings have been tested with two million 'wheel overs'.

Eight winners have now been chosen in the Transforming Road Markings competition and their materials will be tested in all weathers on the M5 in the south west over the next 12 months.

Once complete, the most successful products will be highlighted in research shared around the world and setting new high standards for the road industry.

Keith Dawson, managing director of Roadcare, said:

Competitors from across the globe have told us how refreshing and inspiring it has been that Highways England is leading the way in looking for solutions to what is an international issue. They are fully supportive in helping to find a sustainable solution to the road markings challenges.

Scott Cooper, managing director of strategic highways at Kier, commented:

By working collaboratively with our client and supply chain partners such as WJ, Wilson and Scott and Roadcare we have been able to continue to develop and deliver new ideas, products and processes.

These will help deliver safer roads as scarring and ghosting will disappear. The customer experience through roadworks will improve as a result of clearer markings and finished schemes will have a much cleaner appearance.

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.