

Press release: Giant crash barrier lorries rolled out

The 16-tonne mobile barriers are among the latest innovations demonstrating Highways England's commitment to investing in new technology to improve safety and minimise disruption caused by roadworks and incidents.

In collaboration with Kier, the mobile barriers have been brought over from the USA and launched in the West Midlands, protecting people at work sites and cutting delays by reducing the number of cones needed.

If struck from the side, the barriers absorb the impact from a moving vehicle while a lorry-mounted crash cushion gives further protection at the rear. The mobile barriers act as a physical protection for both road workers and motorists.

As well as improving safety, the roadworks themselves take less time to complete as fewer cones and signs have to be put out.

Meanwhile, another innovation that has been put to use in the West Midlands are four new Solar CCTV Systems (SICS).

Designed and built for Highways England, the mobile CCTV systems can be easily deployed to locations to provide surveillance and feed back information about traffic flows to the control room.

Action can then be taken, such as traffic officers deployed or speed limits lowered, to create smoother journeys.

One of the systems is in use at junction 6 of the M42, near to Birmingham Airport, where people were previously frustrated by congestion and delays. Organisations can now access the information from this camera and plan their journeys and business accordingly.

The cameras offer visibility at sites where a permanent camera is not necessary, such as during roadworks.

Highways England is investing £150 million in innovation to ensure it remains at the forefront of making England's motorways and major A roads dependable, durable and safe.

Martin Bolt, who is heading up the innovation projects for Highways England, said

The mobile barriers, which are being used for the first time in Europe, are an innovative way of looking at how we can increase protection for road workers.

And they're helping customers too, because the faster we can get

the work safely done the better people's journeys will be.

Together with our partners we have are demonstrating that we can make great improvements both to people's journeys and communities and the environment around our network.

Dave Wright, executive director for Kier Highways, commented:

As a company we're committed to working with our partners to ensure we continuously develop technology that improves safety on the road for both road workers and users. We're hugely passionate about this, and our improvements team is constantly looking at ways to innovate and pioneer new products that go towards this aim.

Our main priority is to make sure everyone gets home safely at the end of the day and we look forward to expanding mobile barrier across our other UK contracts.

As part of a commitment to innovation, Highways England has been running two competitions to encourage the UK's most creative minds to come up with fresh ideas to revolutionise roads and driving.

It has set aside £20 million and invited ground-breaking entries which will help develop digital roads – connected vehicles and infrastructure, design and construction that reduces cost and improves safety, better and more predictable journey times – and to improve air quality. The closure date for entries was Wednesday 8 May 2019.

Meanwhile last week Highways England announced that self-driving trucks which could help speed up roadworks are being tested for the first time in England.

The dump trucks, which move huge amounts of earth, provide the potential to work around the clock, so could help reduce the length of time roadworks are on the ground. And by being autonomous they reduce the risk of road workers being involved in incidents on site.

Highways England has committed £150,000 from its innovation designated fund into the dump truck trial on the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon.

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.