

Press release: Good news for drivers as first phase of Midlands M1 smart motorway opens

The first phase between Northampton (junction 16) and the M45 (junction 17) of a new smart motorway tackling congestion and improving journey times for tens of thousands of drivers daily is now open on the M1 in the Midlands.

Up-to-date technology will help keep traffic flowing more smoothly and, with four running lanes instead of three, capacity on the motorway is being increased by a third, now junctions 16 to 17 are open to traffic.

The Highways England upgrade between Catthorpe (junction 19) and Northampton (junction 16) is part of a major government investment worth £15bn to build a modern and resilient road network and further stretches of the new smart motorway are due to open over the coming weeks.

Shaun Pidcock, Director of Highways England's smart motorway programme, said:

This is a significant upgrade for the M1, which connects the north of England and London, and will deliver real benefits for the 125,000 drivers who use it every day. We've added new lanes and completely overhauled the technology, to reduce the frustrating 'stop-start' traffic and give drivers better information to help with their journeys, while maintaining high levels of safety.

As well as the upgrade, we have also been carrying out extensive maintenance, fully resurfacing the motorway and its slip roads and restoring it to an 'as new' condition. We have also introduced new style highly visible 'orange' emergency areas for use when drivers get into difficulty.

I'd like to thank drivers for their co-operation and understanding while we've been building this new, improved road and hope they enjoy the improved journeys.

The smart motorway links with the highly successful new interchange at Catthorpe which is already making a huge difference to people's journeys by improving access to the A14 corridor and removing queueing traffic on the M1, M6 and A14 approaches.

When the smart motorway is complete, traffic sensors will automatically monitor vehicle numbers and adjust the speed limit accordingly. A total of 50 CCTV cameras will also provide 100 per cent coverage of the 15-mile route, and allow Highways England's traffic officers and the emergency services to respond quickly to incidents.

To minimise disruption, Highways England has worked hard to keep all of the lanes open in each direction during the day by carrying out major construction work overnight.

This project is part of the larger M1 junctions 19 to 13 smart motorway project, which is targeted to be completed by 2021-2022, as set out in the 2014 Road Investment Strategy.

For more information, [visit the scheme website.](#)

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.