

# Press release: M6 speed increase in time for Christmas getaway

Highways England introduced a 60mph speed limit on an eight-mile stretch of the motorway between Holmes Chapel and Knutsford (junctions 18 to 19) last night as it works to complete a major upgrade to add extra lanes and new technology to the M6 by spring 2019.

The speed limit increase from 50mph to 60mph is expected to cut journey times between the junctions by almost a fifth as tens of thousands of drivers use the route on their way home for Christmas.

It's the first time a 60mph limit has been used for motorway roadworks in the North West following successful trials in other parts of the country.

Across England, more than 200 miles of roadworks are being lifted in time for the festive getaway to help journeys flow more smoothly and to keep disruption to a minimum.

Highways England will also be keeping motorways closure-free for 12 days over the festive season, so drivers travelling at night on the M6 won't be faced with diversions due to roadworks.

Highways England's project manager Arun Sahni said:

The M6 through Cheshire is used by around 120,000 drivers every day so we're keen to do everything we can to minimise disruption while the major upgrade takes place to improve journeys.

We've been able to increase the speed limit to 60mph on almost half the scheme in time for the Christmas getaway as wider lanes have now been reinstated along this part of the motorway.

We're also on schedule to complete the project by the spring so drivers travelling along the M6 in Cheshire will experience quicker and more reliable journeys in 2019.

Highways England expects to be able to open the first stretch of the M6 smart motorway upgrade between junctions 18 and 19 early next year, and has been able to increase the speed limit to 60mph while testing takes place of the new technology.

A 50mph speed limit will remain in place for safety reasons between junctions 16 and 18 due to construction work taking place along that part of the M6.

When the upgrade is complete, drivers will be able to use an extra lane in each direction – increasing capacity by a third. More than 250 electronic signs will also alert drivers to changes in the speed limit, lane closures

and incidents ahead.

A total of 70 CCTV cameras will provide 100% coverage of the route and allow Highways England's traffic officers and the emergency services to respond quickly to incidents. And 18 emergency areas will be created alongside the motorway to provide drivers with a safe place to stop if they break down.

A similar smart motorway scheme on a stretch of the M62 in West Yorkshire has resulted in commuters saving an average 30 minutes each week, despite an increase in the number of vehicles using the route.

More details on the Cheshire scheme are available on the M6 junctions 16 to 19 smart motorway [scheme web page](#).

## **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.