

Press release: Project 'setts' up new home for badgers near M6

The species is protected by law, and the project team needed to ensure the animals could be relocated to new accommodation so that work could start on the vital upgrade, which will improve journeys for the 120,000 drivers who use this busy route every day.

So specialist teams set about designing and building a new badger sett from scratch. The result was a new home spanning 10 metres and comprising four nesting chambers and connecting pipes. The new sett is dug into the ground to replicate, as far as possible, typical excavations associated with badgers.

Smart motorway project sponsor Peter Smith said:

It's really important that as we work to improve people's journeys, we also protect the environment. We knew from our extensive surveys that we had a family of badgers living next to the motorway and, as a protected species, we needed to relocate the animals with as little distress as possible.

As with any scheme, we worked closely with specialist consultants to build the animals a new habitat that would replicate their former surroundings. We do everything we can to ensure the local environment is protected throughout the programme of works. The badgers have settled in well to their new home and we're pleased to be able to play a part in protecting wildlife near the major road network of England.

The Road Investment Strategy (RIS) states that by 2020 Highways England must reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity, and by 2040 it must deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

The RIS also includes a ring-fenced environment fund of some £300 million to cover the period of 2015 to 2020, which includes funds for biodiversity projects.

Elsewhere, a new otter fence has been installed on the A64 in Yorkshire to prevent the animals crossing the road which could result in incidents and delays.

We've also joined forces with Stover Country Park and Devon County Council to deliver a giant reedbed filter system which will help to keep water clean at Stover Lake and provide valuable habitat for wildlife. The sustainable scheme, also supported by Natural England, is designed to capture and filter water run-off from the A38, nearby industrial sites and farmland before it enters the lake.

Work on the M6 motorway upgrade is set to be completed by March 2020.

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.