

Press release: Top marks for Highways England visit to Birdlip Primary School

Traffic officers Lynne Watkins and Dave Hayett, who normally spend their days patrolling the M5 in Gloucestershire, took time out to visit the primary school as part of a Highways England awareness day.

During the visit this week, five and six-year-old pupils got the chance to chat to the traffic officers about their jobs and see their patrol vehicle and the equipment used every day as they patrol England's major A roads and motorways.

Birdlip Primary School teacher, Sue Harding, said:

Children's learning is always enhanced by real life, hands-on experiences and the children really enjoyed meeting the traffic officers and hearing about the important role they play keeping people safe on the M5.

Around 30 pupils took part in the session and had a chance to sit in the traffic officers' vehicle and try out the controls.

Highways England traffic officer, Lynne Watkins, said:

This visit offered a great opportunity to explain our work and raise the issue of road safety with a young and very enthusiastic audience.

Children in a Traffic Officer vehicle during the visit

On the same day the team behind the A417 Missing Link also attended the school to host a bridge-building exercise with nine and ten-year-olds. The team helped the pupils design and build their own bridge as part of a longer-term STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) Highways England initiative.

Mike Goddard, A417 Senior Project Manager said:

The bridge building was designed to be a fun activity for the students while allowing us to start a conversation about the importance of engineering in our everyday lives.

The A417 team is currently putting its expertise to use refining proposals

for the upgrade to the A417. Known locally as the 'missing link' at Air Balloon roundabout, this stretch of single carriageway road between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout restricts the flow of traffic on a key route which is otherwise a continuous dual carriageway between the M5 at Gloucester and the M4 at Swindon.

Upgrading this section to dual carriageway will help facilitate 54,000 new homes and 370 hectares of employment land due to be created before 2031, helping people live and work, and businesses to invest in the south west.

Mike Goddard added:

The A417 is a vital route that helps people get to work, school, visit friends and family. We are working to upgrade this section of road to improve safety, support the economy and ease congestion and pollution, making it more convenient for its regular users and improving the well-being of those who live nearby.

This scheme presents some particular challenges given the route passes through the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, alongside the very challenging topography.

More information about proposals for the A417 can be found on the [scheme website](#) where Highways England hold a live monthly web chat. Members of the public can join in and ask questions about the scheme.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of a Highways England traffic officer go to the [Traffic Officer web pages](#).

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.