

# Press release: M5 Oldbury viaduct repair project approaches key milestone

The project involves concrete repairs and waterproofing along a two-mile section of the ageing viaduct in the West Midlands.

Work on the southbound carriageway, between junctions 1 and 2, is approaching completion and in the coming weeks the entire operation, involving more than 500 workers, transfers to the northbound carriageway.

Already more than 5,000 separate repairs have been carried out on the southbound carriageway, 3,500 more than anticipated.

The majority of work is scheduled to continue until autumn 2018, with other work continuing into spring 2019.

Highways England senior project manager, Zbigniew Twarowski, said:

The scale of this project is vast and has involved a large number of repairs.

On top of that we've had one of the harshest winters in years, which has added to the challenges.

We will not know the full extent of the repairs needed on the northbound carriageway until work there is under way.

We appreciate the level of disruption this project involves and I'd like to thank motorists, businesses and residents for their patience. Meanwhile, our teams are working as hard as they can to get the job done.

At more than £100 million, M5 Oldbury is believed to be the largest concrete repair project, by value, ever carried out in Britain.

Much of the work takes place underneath the viaduct and so workers cannot always be seen on the surface itself.

To keep the motorway open, a contraflow system is in place with traffic currently using the northbound carriageway with two lanes operating in each direction, along with a 30mph speed limit. Traffic is anticipated to move to the southbound carriageway in June.

Slip roads at junctions 1 and 2 are being kept open to ease effects on the local network.

However, as part of the work, a number of closures of the southbound off-slip at junction 2 are planned, for more information check the [Highways England Roadworks Finder](#).

## **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.

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# **[News story: Tough new rules to protect UK's critical infrastructure come into force](#)**

New measures to protect the nation's critical infrastructure and digital services from cyber attacks and computer network failure come into force today.

Bosses of firms in health, water, energy, transport and digital infrastructure will now be expected to have robust safeguards in place against cyber threats and report breaches and network outages to regulators within 72 hours or they face fines of up to £17 million.

The new law announced by Digital Minister Margot James will help reduce the number of damaging cyber attacks affecting the UK.

The National Cyber Security Centre, set up by the government in October 2016 as part of GCHQ, has already responded to more than 950 significant incidents, including WannaCry.

It will also give new regulators powers to assess critical industries and make sure plans are in place to prevent attacks.

The regulator will have the power to issue legally-binding instructions to improve security, and – if necessary – impose significant fines.

The legislation will also cover other threats affecting IT such as hardware failures and environmental hazards.

Margot James, Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries, said:

It's vital that we put in place tough new measures to strengthen the UK's cyber security and make sure we are the safest place in the world to live and be online.

Organisations must act now to make sure that they are primed and ready to stop potential cyber attacks and be resilient against major disruption to the services we all rely on.

Fines would be a last resort and will not apply to operators which have assessed the risks adequately, taken appropriate security measures and engaged with regulators but still suffered an attack.

Incidents must be reported directly to the appropriate regulator. Where an incident has a cyber security aspect, organisations should contact the NCSC for support and advice. The NCSC will also act as the Single Point of Contact between the UK and EU Member States.

As the UK's technical authority on cyber security, the NCSC is supporting competent authorities and has developed a set of 14 cyber security principles, as well as [supporting guidance](#), to improve the cyber security of operators of essential services.

Ciaran Martin, Chief Executive of the NCSC, said:

These new measures will help to strengthen the security of the UK's infrastructure.

By acting on the National Cyber Security Centre's expert technical advice and reporting incidents, organisations can protect themselves against those who would do us harm.

The UK government is committed to making the UK the safest place to live and do business online, but we can't do this alone. Every citizen, business and organisation must play their part.

The NIS Directive is an important part of the Government's five-year £1.9 billion National Cyber Security Strategy to protect the nation from cyber threats and make the UK the safest place to live and work online. It will ensure essential service operators are taking the necessary action to protect their IT systems.

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[News story: HMCTS reform roadshow for](#)

# Legal professionals

We are modernising our courts and tribunals system to make it more straightforward, accessible and efficient for all. It's an ambitious £1bn programme designed to improve it for both those who use it for those who work within it.

Over the last six months, we have held a series of [roadshow events](#) to engage and inform legal professionals on the reform agenda, and we are holding another event in London on 24 May 2018 as part of an ongoing schedule of activities designed to hear your views. So, if you are a legal professional or professional court user, we would be delighted if you would attend this event to hear more about what we are doing and have the opportunity to ask HMCTS Chief Executive, Susan Acland-Hood, any questions you may have.

As our reform programme gathers pace, we want to hear from legal professionals, giving you the opportunity to ask questions and share your ideas to ensure the changes are making the system better for all. We do hope you can make it.

Please use the link below to book your place at the event. Spaces are limited.

[Book your place for roadshow event on 24 May 2018](#)

If you are unable to attend the event in person, you can view the event through a live stream which will be available on this page 30mins before the event starts. You are welcome to [submit questions in advance](#). Please include your name, area of practice and organisation along with your question.

During the event, we will be using [Slido](#) to take additional questions. On the day of the event, we will provide the Slido event code on this page so you can participate.

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## News story: The first GovTech Catalyst competition launches today

Daesh poses a threat to UK national security as it seeks to expand its terror network, using propaganda to radicalise and recruit citizens from the UK and across the world. The Home Office already has the technology to determine 94% of Daesh videos with 99.995% accuracy. However, 80% of Daesh media is still imagery. These images, tailored for local markets, rarely contain consistent features meaning innovation is needed to have the same success as for video.

We are looking for concepts that can be developed into workable solutions. Winning companies will be awarded up to £50,000 to develop their ideas. A further £500,000 may be available to continue development and test the successful solutions in the public sector.

There are [5 different challenge competitions](#) in the first GovTech Catalyst round.

This challenge competition closes on 27 June 2018. Registration for this competition closes on 20 June 2018. No late applications can be accepted.

## Why pitch a solution to a GovTech challenge competition

The GovTech challenge is your opportunity to help improve vital public services while growing your business. We're looking for firms to come up with smart solutions to fix public-sector problems. You'll get the opportunity to work with high-profile public-sector partners and to raise your profile both nationally and internationally.

## How to pitch a solution

Companies can pitch a solution to an open challenge competition on the [Innovation Funding Service website](#). Each challenge competition page includes information on how to apply, the dates, funding available, project scope and challenge context.

There will also be launch events for each challenge competition where interested companies can meet people from the public sector body responsible for the challenge (the challenge owner). [Sign up to the GovTech community mailing list](#) for dates and more information.

You can also [join the GovTech Catalyst team at monthly meetups](#) to connect the GovTech sector to the public sector.

## Round 1 competition schedule

We'll add dates and links as the competitions launch:

- [Identifying Daesh still imagery](#) (open 14 May to 27 June 2018)
- Tracking waste through the waste chain (opening June 2018)
- Tackling loneliness and rural isolation (opening July 2018)
- Cutting traffic congestion (opening August 2018)

- Deploying smart sensors on council vehicles to improve services (opening September 2018)

## About the GovTech Catalyst

GovTech aims to encourage small, emerging technology businesses to create and develop innovative solutions to public services, that once proven can move to scale both to the advantage of markets and society.

GovTech Catalyst competitions help the public sector identify and work with cutting edge technology firms. They use the [SBRI process](#), supported by [Innovate UK](#).

Read more about the [GovTech Catalyst programme aims](#).

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## [News story: New Chair appointed to Animal and Plant Health Agency Board](#)

Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove, has approved the appointment of Chris Nicholson to the role of Chair of the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) Board, following a competitive selection process.

The appointment started on 1 May 2018 and will run for three years.

### Biographical details

Chris has spent his career as an economist and corporate and project finance specialist, primarily at KPMG. For the past year he has been an interim director at the East West Railway Company.

During 2016, he was project director of the Cabinet Office sponsored Regulatory Futures Review which looked at best practice regulation and how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of non-economic statutory regulators.

He started his career as a government economist before joining KPMG where he was a partner for 17 years including periods as Head of Central Government and Head of the Public Sector practice.

Chris also served as a Special Adviser in the Department of Energy and Climate Change during the coalition government.